UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Native Education: A Learning Journey

by

Diana M. Steinhauer ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Education
in Educational Administration

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DEDICATION

To the members of the First Nation who opened their hearts and minds to this, my learning journey. I am humbled by your kindness, honesty, sharing, and determination.

To the children, including my own, for who we leave a legacy of hope.

All my relations.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the educational needs, concerns, and desires of a First Nations community in Alberta. It is reflective of the issues which were presented in the *Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education* study completed in 1987 by Alberta Education. It has been determined that the educational needs and concerns found in this community are similar to those which are presented in the study. Additional characteristics and features unique to this First Nation have been identified.

The learning aspect of this thesis is ascribed to the literature on colonialism which has provided me with an opportunity to shift my paradigm about the circumstances and issues faced by this particular First Nations community. Thus, the meaning and understanding for why and how the First Nations operate and view themselves was clarified. The theory, practise, and attitudes prevelent in colonial mentality has created multiple layers of behaviours and patterns of distress for First Nations to address. It behooves First Nations people in this study and everywhere to begin to peel away these layers to discern and reclaim for themselves the power and legitimization of their own cultural norms, values, and beliefs. The learning journey of finding meaning and seeking understanding is for every First Nation member.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Constitutionally, the provision of education for First Nations people in Canada is a federal responsibility. Over the years, the federal government has addressed this responsibility in a cost-benefit manner. This approach has resulted in educational services considered by many First Nations to be less than adequate, especially when compared to the services offered by the provinces of Canada. The resultant effects of the low quality of educational services available to First Nations have been identified to include:

> drop-out rates, the dearth of native students graduating from colleges and universities, suicides, a disproportionate number of native young in correctional institutions, age/grade retardation and unacceptable levels of poverty and aicoholism, (Native Education in Alberta, 1984, p. I).

Although these effects have been ascribed to inadequate educational services, other factors and variables also contribute to the challenges facing First Nations people in Alberta.

The provinces of Canada offer educational services to their constituents. These services enjoy generous funding, highly qualified and adequate personnel,

frequent research studies, and general political support. Consequently, the educational services rendered by these provinces are considered to be of high quality.

To address the issues of the First Nations with respect to their educational needs, the Native People of Alberta undertook a study of the First Nations in 1987. The report of the study centred on "the purpose of education and the role of the school, the programs of studies for native students, the delivery of education to native students, and educational partnership" (p. 5). The views of the First Nations people in Alberta with respect to these themes were sought and aggregated and recommendations were made to Alberta Education.

Since the submission of these recommendations in 1987, there has been no follow-up study to investigate the extent to which the concerns and problems of the First Nations, identified in the study, have been solved. Neither has there been any study to investigate the concerns and problems of a specific reserve community. To meet this need, this research is concerned with the study of the educational concerns and problems of the First Nations people.

The Purpose of the Study

The First Nations people included in this study are organized under Treaty six. The reserve specific to this study has a member population of approximately 1000 people. The band is governed by an elected Chief and council. All reserves in Canada are bound by the Indian Act and the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The

education of the First Nations people is a federal responsibility as provided in the Treaty six agreement.

In the past, INAC operated schools on reserves serving students of the reserve community exclusively. These schools operated during the era of integration favoured by federal educational policy. At this time, INAC signed tuition agreements with school boards to provide educational services to First Nation students. As the quality of educational service in provincial schools was observably of higher quality and standard than schools operated under federal control, many children were bussed to provincial schools. This arrangement was not without its difficulties. Eventually First Nations people lobbied for schools on reserves to be their responsibility for operation and management.

In this follow up study of the one conducted in 1984, the elementary school is located on reserve. The tuition agreements signed by INAC and the neighbouring school boards are of a long term commitment and thus, the reserve residents send their children to provincial schools for the high school grades.

Several studies have focused on the arrangement of educational services for the students in this community (Clintberg, 1987; Woloshyn & Sloan, 1984; McGinnis, 1980). However, these studies focused primarily on the school, with little or no mention of the community and its educational needs and concerns. The 1987 study of the First Nations educational views by the Native People of Alberta aggregated the views of the First Nations from all over the province including urban centres. Hence

the unique concerns and views expressed by the First Nations in this study could not have been given a separate treatment.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the extent to which the issues, concerns, and problems, raised in the 1987 study are reflective of this reserve community. Secondly, the study will attempt to identify other issues, concerns, and problems that are unique to these people, and to determine the extent to which the recommendations put forth by the 1987 study have been implemented on this reserve.

The Research Question

This study is concerned with four major research problems. First, are the concerns, needs, and problems of First Nations people with respect to their education, as identified by the Native People study of 1987, those of the people in this community? Second, are there other concerns, needs, and problems that are unique to these people? Third, do the people perceive that some of the recommendations made by the Native People Study of 1987 have been implemented to their satisfaction? Fourth, what future directions that are worthy of pursuit to fulfil the unique educational needs of the reserve can be identified?

Specific Research Problems

1. What are the present educational concerns of the people living in this particular reserve?
2. To what extent are the following issues of concern to these people:

a. Knowledge of the First Nations culture by the teachers?

b. Parental involvement in educational decision-making?

c. Representation of the First Nations in the structure of educational decision-makers?

d. Support for the position of the First Nation community to assist schools in meeting the educational needs of First Nation students?

3. What efforts do the community members perceive to have been made to meet the needs stated in number 2 above?

4. What steps would the community members expect to be taken to meet future needs?

Significance of the Problem

The ultimate effectiveness of the educational arrangement made for the First Nations people depends, largely, on its compatibility to the needs, desires, and outcomes of the First Nations people. G. Matkin, a former Superintendent of Schools, Cardston, was quoted as saying, "We have always been doing things for or to the Native people. We come at them with our own set of values, instead of trying to learn their values" (Native Education in Alberta, 1984, p.13). To the extent to which discrepancy exists between educational planners and the needs and concerns of the recipients, to that extent a gap exists in educational efforts and educational outcomes.

By highlighting, through this study, the specific needs and concerns of the First Nations people of this community, educational planners will be better informed in discharging their roles. The results of this study are expected to enhance the benefits from educational efforts made towards the people. Also, by discovering the role played by conflicting perceptions of educational planners and educational recipients, the study will add to or support the body of theories in educational administration.

Definition of Terms

Indian: A person recognized as an Indian under the terms of the Indian Act (R.S.C. 1949, C.199).

First Nation: Refers to a political/ community unit and is generally used as a reference to sovereignty and nationhood among the First Peoples of this land. Used interchangeably with Indian Band.

Indian Reserve: The areas of Federal Crown land, embodied within the terms of the Treaties, and set aside from other Crown lands, which constitute the legal domain of the individual Indian Bands, and which are secured for their exclusive occupation, use, exploitation and development.

Indian Band: The recognized community unit of Indian people living on a reserve or on Crown land.

Indian Band Council: The representative body of Indian people, including both Chief and Councillors, given the responsibility for managing the affairs of the Indian

Band under the terms of the Indian Act.

Indian-related definitions were adopted from Daniels (1973). Indian and First Nations are used interchangeable throughout this study. The selection of terms are used appropriately and are in compliance with the peoples choice of reference to themselves. Thus, First Nations people is the terminology most recognized as correct in the present time.

Educational integration: An educational arrangement which provides for children of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to be taught and to learn together.

Band Council Resolution (B.C.R.): A formal document signed by Chief and Council communicated to the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada officials as those decisions which are made by a quorum during a regular band meeting.

Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) : The levels of educational services provided to young children prior to entering first grade.

Delimitation and Limitations

This study is delimited to one reserve community located in the province of Alberta. It is designed to cover only specific concerns, needs, and problems as perceived by those involved in the study. It therefore, can not be expected to be an exhaustive text on all the educational problems and needs of the First Nations people.

The study is conducted within a time context. Therefore, future studies may or may not reflect the findings in this study. Generalizations to other reserves can only be made after the uniqueness of the people described herein has been properly considered.

Assumptions

A major assumption of this study is that the outcomes derived from educational efforts depend, among other things, on the integration of the needs, concerns, and desires of educational recipients to the efforts. Where discrepancies exist in the expectations of educational planners and recipients, the outcomes from educational efforts are greatly eroded.

Another assumption made here is that the key informants who provide the data for this study are well-informed about the educational needs, concerns, and desires of the people of this community. It is also assumed that the data provided by them are accurate and valid representation of what exists on the reserve.

Bias

I acknowledge bias which must be considered in this study. I am a First Nation's person. I have an affiliation to this community by way of being related to individuals and their families. Furthermore, as a First Nations' person, I acknowledge personal experiences with schooling and community practises which may affect the interpretations of the educational decisions selected by this particular community. I

considered these connections very seriously as I collected the data, analysed its significance and as I offered solutions.

I selected this particular study in the context of holding a firm conviction and belief in the responsibility of parents to be involved in their children's schooling. This had been my reality of First Nation's control of schooling. I am a product of the local control movement which occurred early in the 1970s, having graduated from twelfth grade at the Blue Quills School in 1979. Growing up and attending school daily, I saw my parents, uncles, aunts, and other relatives in positions of authority and making decisions. The atmosphere generated by the school's leaders has had a profound affect on my perception about education and schools and parental rights and responsibilities. Thus, I entered into this study anticipating a similar experience to my own with the leaders and parents working together to affirm and support their children's schooling experiences.

It became apparent very early in this study, that a different set of variables and values were operating on this reserve. As I interviewed the participants about their needs, concerns, and desires for their children's schooling on the reserve, I became increasingly alarmed by the responses. I transcribed the interviews to look for themes expecting to find a path that was recognizable to those taken by my own relatives. However, this was not to be. Instead I readily reacted to the state of powerlessness, helplessness, and apathy that was visible in the transcripts by feeling remorseful.

I could not present this information as it was too negative. In my heart, I

believed in the strength of the people's will. There was much to learn from these people only it was not yet within my grasp. One of my teachers told me that in order to thoroughly understand, you have to walk in the other persons' world. My teacher described this as "double understanding". As I was not prepared to present a thesis that cast a negative frame onto any First Nations' community, more questions needed to be asked so that I might learn what was not readily apparent to me. Thus, my personal learning journey began. I placed the transcripts aside for a short time while I began this learning trek.

My learning journey brought me to a First Nation's Education Forum which was held in Hobbema in 1992. I attended a workshop presented by Andrea Bear-Nicholas, of the Maliseet First Nation in New Brunswick. As a historian, Andrea worked industriously to place into the record the history of Canada's early beginnings as told by the Maliseet First Nations' oral traditions. Andrea's topic was intriguing, "Decolonizing the Curriculum in First Nation's Schools", however, I did not realize the impact that this presentation would have on my world view. She astounded me with her knowledge of the effect that colonization has had on First Nations people and communities. I was breathless and speechless. Quite amazingly, I had a lump in my throat and lights were flashing in my mind during this lecture. Suddenly, I had an expianation as to why the people I had interviewed in this study assumed postures of powerlessness and helplessness.

After the workshop, I spoke with Andrea about my perceptions of what I was

studying. She directed me to read more on colonization and its effects. Such authors as F. Fanon (1963), A. Memmi (1965), and P. Friere (1970), were on her list of readings. She also mentioned that it would be a very worthwhile thesis to bring to the forefront the effects that colonization has had on our people and also to direct the way towards decolonization. Andrea referred to Paulo Friere's work, stating that true education opens the mind and frees the people from the shackles of oppression.

I started to search the libraries for these titles and authors. I assumed that these books would be readily available, especially at the university libraries. My assumptions were wrong. I learned that the university did not have reference to any of these titles in their collections with the exception of a book authored by Fanon which was kept in the special collections library. I went to check out this particular book, and I found that the special collections library does not lend these books, and furthermore that the book was available in French only. I checked the city libraries for these titles to no avail. As a last resort, I went to the library at Blue Quills First Nations College and found every title that was listed in Andrea's bibliography. This diversion in searching through libraries taught me that I was dealing with a subject that, although profoundly important to understanding Canada-First Nations relations and education, is not readily available nor accessible to the general public. I wondered why.

The literature review includes a general overview of colonization and it's effects on humanity, digressing momentarily to explore the educational leadership and

administration paradigm. I conclude with a brief description on First Nation's schooling experiences from the past to the present context.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Colonialism

I sit on a man's back, choking him, and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to ease his lot by any means possible, except getting off his back.
***Tolstoy** (source unknown)*

This important and timely theme is presented to raise the awareness of the effects and tolls which colonialism has had on Indigenous people. It is essential to educate our people about the meaning and objectives of colonization. Duran (1995) cites Edward Said whose defination of colonialism includes imperialism, which means the "practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre" (Said 1993, p. 9). Devrome (1991) describes colonialism as an "assymetrical relationship" where colonizers render domination over the colonized people (p. 1). In a thorough review of the current literature on colonization, Devrome (1991) relays the research of J.S. Frideres (1983) who distinguishes the colonial invasion of Canada as having seven parts (1983: 295 - 299). In summary these parts are as follows:

Part I - Initial contact; and

Part II - The negative impact on native people; and

Part III & IV - Political/Economic powerlessness and dependency; and

Part V - Low level of services provided to native people, example health and education; and

Part VI & VII - Racism and establishment of color line (p. 23-25).

Colonization was specifically and deliberately intended to transform colonies established by Europeans for the purposes of enriching the mother country. Hence, the exploitation of land, resources, and the very humanity of Indigenous populations inhabiting these lands. To colonialists, Indigenous peoples were perceived to be wild in nature and therefore, were to be tamed and managed as were the lands they occupied.

Colonialists justified their edict through a variety of methods. Fanon, (1963) postulates,

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today (p 210).

Hence, through various means, the colonizers set about their business of degrading and denying the humanity of Indigenous people. Myths were created in order to dichotomize the natives, who were the colonized, from the Europeans who were the colonizers. These myths served to ensure that the two peoples lives would not be engaged nor did they interact in relationships of balanced power. Power and authority

was seized by the colonizer over the colonized.

The propagation of these myths encouraged hatred, suspicion, and fear amongst the colonizer and their offspring towards the "natives". The natives' lot in life was considered to be lower than the superior ways of the colonizers. Therefore, the Indigenous livelihood and world view was scorned, belittled, and devalued. The colonized were seen to be akin to all that was considered as darkness and backward. The colonizer was akin to all that was good and enlightened. The colonial experience has occurred around the world where indigenous people live.

Review of the literature on colonialism reveals fundamental beliefs that pervade its essence and survival in western ideology. Racism is fundamental to colonization. Hatred bred from the dichotomous relationship between the colonizer and colonized serves to justify inhumane practises. Money is the commodity of a market economy. A value stemming from the zealous acquisition of goods and consumerism, is greed. The dominion of man over the environment has lead to land debasement and dispossession of lands from Indigenous people. The emphasis on individualism is necessary to propagate the need to destroy and pillage the environment.

The survival of western society depends on its ability to obliterate traditionalism. Traditionalism undermines and threatens the myths and material core values of western ideology propagated by colonization. Therefore, colonial institutions focus on colonizing traditionally based societies. In The Colonizer's Model of the World, J. M. Blaut (1993) deliberates on the dualism that was created in

western ideology to set it apart from the traditional worldview as follows:

Characteristics of Core	Characteristics of Periphery
Inventiveness	Imitativeness
Rationality, intellect	Irrationality, emotion, instinct
Abstract thought	Concrete thought
Theoretical reasoning	Empirical, practical reasoning
Mind	Body, matter
Discipline	Spontaneity
Adulthood	Childhood
Sanity	Insanity
Science	Sorcery
Progress	Stagnation (p. 17)

Blaut (1993) ascribes the colonizers' worldview to ethnocentricism and thus will consider themselves to be the core of the colony. The periphery of the colony describes those subjects that are identifiable as the "natives" or Indigenous people. The point of the comparison is to show that "Europe is advanced and non-Europe is backward, any ideas that diffuse into Europe must be ancient, savage, atavistic, uncivilized, evil" (p.16). Further along in the book, Blaut (1993) concedes that these ascribed characteristics are the basis for the myths developed to ensure that colonizers were successful in the achievement of their goals.

The colonizer's ideology is built into the systems of government, justice,

schools, and churches. Each institution in turn has assumed a stance to oppress Indigenous people for the purposes of assimilation and "civilizing" the native populations. Once assimilated, the colonizers can and have claimed the small tracts of land currently held in trust by Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Institutions were not the sole instrument of the colonizers in dispossessing and oppressing Indigenous people from their land base. Other measures used were the overt spread of pestilence and starvation. The Americas were once populated by Indigenous people by the millions. In a matter of decades, these numbers diminished to the thousands. Today, Indigenous people make up 1 per cent of the total population in Canada.

Furthermore, over the years, paternalistic government legislation has created systems of dependency. Dependency vanquishes the people and strips them of pride, worth, and value. The colonized people lose hope as their lives lose purpose and meaning. As silent victims of oppression, isolated, and resigned to defeat, these conditions are claimed as the fruit of native inferiority. Hill (1995) asserts that, "The European came with the belief that everything was chattel, property to be purchased, stolen, or owned, including the women and the children" (p.12).

Hopeless and powerless. Indigenous people become alienated from purposeful existence and experience anomie. Hill (p. 11, 1995) quotes Antone, Hill, and Myers, in asserting that, "Anomie denotes a people's loss of faith and belief in their own institutions, values, and existence." The means to an end in this type of existence

pattern leads to medicating and abuses of self, others, and the environment. Indigenous people learned to experience hatred of themselves, their parents, and ancestors. The myths after a time, become self-fulfilling prophesies. One of the most common myths is that of the drunken Indian (Duran, 1995 p. 118). Hill (1995) further postulates that the Indigenous people suffered countless traumas at the hands of the colonizer and in the colonial institutions over the years. These traumas have created what is referred to as "ethno stress":

> "Ethnostress occurs when the cultural beliefs or joyful identity of a people are disrupted. It is the negative experience they feel when interacting with members of different cultural groups and themselves. The stress within the individual centres around the self-image and sense of place in the world. Beginning on an individual basis, the effects of the "Ethnostress" phenomena are analyzed and applied to the collective groups of family, community, and nation (Hill, 1995, p.13).

Hill (1995) goes on to mention that the distress patterns that are enacted on a daily basis are carried from one generation to the next and are described as "layers of pain" (p. 13).

The most devastating effect of colonialism on the colonized people is the claim and desire to exist as the colonizer. This phenomena is referred to as neo-colonialism. The colonized people having been totally brainwashed to despise all that is associated with "natives" including language and culture. Instead, they perceive the life of the

colonizer as one of value, promise, and progress. Therefore, they lay claim to colonial institutions with zeal and exhortation to be in power and authority over others. The internalization of the oppression leads to behaviours and patterns which limit social, political, and economic conditions of Indigenous communities. These patterns are both negative and distressful. Not only do they cause additional dissension and rifts, but also calamity in the families and relationships of the community. Critical examination of existing practises amongst Indigenous people across the country shows that we have unconsciously, surreptitiously, and without reflection, adopted the continuation of colonialism under the guise of a brown face. Returning to the objective of colonialism, we are proceeding towards the desired state of being assimilated or agreeing with genocide, by our own choice.

The pattern of colonialism as described in the literature leads to neo-colonialism and then to the desired end, assimilation. This is the end state where all human beings are slaves to the establishment. This effect leads to a state of dehumanization of both colonizer and the colonized, or as Friere (1994, p. 99) describes "No matter that the oppressor eat well, be well regarded, or sleep well. It would be impossible to dehumanize without being dehumanized".

An alternative action is to claim decolonization and begin to move towards post-colonial consciousness. We must choose before we are coerced by the colonizers, who would lead us towards total assimilation. We can choose to jump over and follow the life of the colonizers who live amongst us in Canada, hence,

leaving behind the road which was travelled by our ancestors for countless generations. The other choice we have is to return to the roots of our traditional knowledge and reclaim the institutions which we once used to govern, educate, and work in meaningful and purposeful ways.

Educators have the duty to inform leadership and communities of this phenomenon. As educators who have moved through the schooling systems of Euro-Canadian society, we know of the contradictions and hazards in education and of colonization. We must understand that we now operate as the colonizer as we exhibit all of the outward signs and know that this has been a destructive force in our history. Awareness of colonialism is the first step toward decolonizing and healing. The next step is to dialogue and strengthen our human relationships. It is within our power to decolonize our people, as Hill (1995) concedes, "To renew the spirit and heal the communities, we must start on an individual basis to heal the self" (p. 13).

Leadership

First Nations leadership then have the challenge of first healing themselves, and then facilitating a process of awareness and change, moving from the colonial experience through de-colonization, avoiding the traps of neo-colonialism where a local elite of the oppressed become the oppressors.

In his book Native American Post-Colonial Psychology, E. Duran (1995) refers to the thinking of P. Freire (1990): "it is impossible for the oppressor to liberate

the oppressed. In reality what happens in an ideal situation is that the oppressed, in enacting his/her liberation, will also liberate the oppressor" (1995, p. 198). So we see that we have to do this for ourselves, and educational leaders have a role in the decolonization process.

> In the 21st Century, Native Education will assume a distinctive Native flavour; and Indian education will begin to do what all education systems should do -- promote the culture of the society it serves. Bearing im mind that culture is dynamic in nature and adaptive in purpose, this does not mean halting the development of the Native societies in Canada. It means moving at a rate and along a path that is satisfactory and meaningful to the people for whom the education is intended. (Green, 1990. p. 37).

As Vine Deloria says in his foreword to Gregory Cajete's (1994) book, Look to the Mountain, an Ecology of Indian Education , "Moving from one perspective to another is no simple matter, and consequently, Indian education and educators badly need a generation of original thinkers who can scan both points of view. They can build models and interpretations of the world that serve as transitions to enable Indians to communicate with the non-Indian body of knowledge and demonstrate the validity of the Indian understanding." (p. 13). Decolonization will be a learning process for First Nations communities and Gregory Cajete explores the Native framework for learning,

- Its elements, activities, and knowledge bases of teaching and learning radiate

in concentric rings of process and relationship.

- It recognizes and incorporates the principle of cycles within cycles (there are deeper levels of meaning to be found in every learning/ teaching process).
- It presents something for everyone to learn, at every stage of life.
- It recognizes that each person and each culture contains the seeds that are essential to their well-being and positive development.
- It recognizes that true learning occurs through participation and honouring relationships in both the human and natural communities.
- Its purpose is to teach a way of life that sustains both the individual and the community (1994, p. 29-31).

According to Peter Senge (1990), in a learning organization "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together," (p. 3). Organizations are driven by the people's commitment to life-long learning. Life-long learning is a cornerstone of First Nations philosophy.

The University of Oklahoma has developed materials for workshops offered in Native communities throughout North America. They identify leadership qualities or characteristics which are important in team building achieving wellness as a community. A quality Native leader has vision, empowers people, communicates, mentors, practices consensus at grassroots level, listens, models healthy behaviour,

knows self spiritually, emphasizes cultural, community and family values, and celebrates victories no matter how small (p. 26, workshop manual).

Vision is perhaps an essential element in any decolonization effort. We often ask ourselves what we would like our communities to look like in 25 years, then attempt to devise a plan which will fill the gap. Margaret J. Wheatley (1992) suggests that,

> In linear fashion, we have most often conceived of vision as thinking into the future, creating a *destination* for the organization. We have believed that the clearer the image of the destination, the more force the future would exert on the present, pulling us into the desired future state. ... But what if we changed the science and looked at vision as a field? If we saw a field of vision that needed to permeate organizational space, rather than viewing vision as a linear destination. (p. 53 - 54).

Understanding vision as energy, as life force, is consistent with the First Nations paradigm and teachings, and allows that where we are now is related to where we are going and how we will get there. The challenge is not simply having or committing to a collective vision. As D. Craig explains in CMA Magazine, 1996, "the challenge we face is that conceptually we try to draw such a fine line between managing and leading that we actually blur the distinction. ... to simplify it.... The distinction is between getting others to do and getting others to want to do!" (p.3).

Kouzes and Posner (1995) suggest that effective leaders are at their best when they challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart.

> *Go to the people, live with them, learn from them, love them. Start with what they know, build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say, "we have done this ourselves."*
>
> ***Lao Tsu** (Friere & Horton, 1990, p. 247-8)*

The History of Formal Schooling of First Nations in the West

Formal schooling was introduced to the west in the same pattern as was used to educate First Nations of the eastern regions of Canada. Missionaries established schools to provide education for First Nations people. These institutions were funded and supported by the federal government of Canada. The Canadian government is responsible for providing education for the First Nations people as was determined in Treaty six of 1886. The primary goal of these schools was to convert First Nations people to Christianity and to educate the people so that they could lead similar lives to the settlers.

Whether or not these schools were successful in changing the First Nations people is debatable (Barnum et al., 1986, p.82). However, the residential schools remained in place until the late 1940s in Alberta, and until the 1980s in Saskatchewan. Segregated educational services for First Nations children were replaced by the

practice of integration (McInnes, 1987, p.47).

Integration meant that First Nations children would be bussed to the nearest provincial schools to be integrated with all other students in the area. The federal government policy determining this shift was one of assimilation (McGinnes, 1987). Integration became the major means for educating First Nations children from the 1950's until the early 1970's when another change in educational service delivery came into being. The issue of integration as it pertains to this community will be discussed in the next section.

The events leading up to the 1970 paradigm shift changed the direction of First Nations education. In 1969 the federal government attempted to relinquish their role with First Nations people. The policy proposals that became known as the White Paper of 1969, had as the outcome effect the erosion of the distinct status of First Nations people in Canada. First Nations were to live as other Canadians and responsibility for services including education was to shift from the federal to the provincial government. In response to this proposal, Alberta First Nations leaders acted promptly to respond with a counter-proposal. The Red Paper, called Citizen's Plus (1970) was written by First Nation leaders defending their rights and unique relationship with the federal government as was defined by Treaty six. The action was successful in preventing the White Paper from being enacted into legislation. This action had a wide impact on what was to happen in education for First Nations people in the following decades.

Schooling of First Nations Children in a Reserve Community

In the 1930s, a day school was built on the reserve. It was managed and controlled by INAC. The community children attended the day school until they reached sixth grade. After grade six, students were sent to residential schools located in central Alberta. The school on the reserve was enlarged to accommodate older children in 1953 (Clintberg, 1987). The following year the school was burned to the ground leaving the people of this reserve without a school.

By this time, the federal government had adopted the policy of educational integration. Rather than rebuilding the school on the reserve, the government favoured bussing all school aged children into the nearby provincial schools. An agreement was made with each school jurisdiction and INAC where the First Nations children were to attend. Since First Nation people living on reserves are tax exempt, the government agreed to pay the cost of "tuition and associated charges" (Daniels, 1966). The school district accommodated the First Nations students wherever space was available. Thus, First Nations students were enrolled in several different schools.

Educational Integration

Hamilton (1966) defines integration as, the process of acculturation of a minority to the normative, majority culture in a non-segregated environment, a process which at the same time allows the retention to some extent of a separate social

structure (p. 14).

In his thesis, Hamilton researched the process of integration as it affects the interaction of minority and majority groups. He argued that integration is not independent of those who are involved in the schooling process. This process includes teachers, administrators, and students of both groups. He argues that "placing Indian children in a non-Indian school does not guarantee interaction between Indians and non-Indians, nor does it guarantee a non-segregated environment" (p. 15).

Integration of First Nations students has been adopted and implemented in a very short time. Studies concerning the effects of integration did not begin to appear, of course, until after the policy was implemented. Inevitably, problems resulting from this policy emerged just as rapidly as it was implemented. Clifton (1971) referred to Dumont and Wax, 1969; Fisher, 1969; Fuchs, 1970, in discussing some problems of integration.

> The experience of a wholesale integration policy has not always been successful. . . . when they (the Indians first enter non-Indian schools they are often less able to communicate in English and consequently they often have higher failure rates than the non-Indian students. Indian students have also experienced other problems in integrated schools, such as problems resulting from their family's relatively low standard of living as compared with the non-Indian students. . . . . Indian students are often considered outsiders in the non-Indian school just as their parents are often considered outsiders in the

North American society (p.3-4).

Hamilton suggested that problems in integrated schools must be identified, recognized, and understood in order to take serious action to overcome them. "To the extent that problems of integration are not perceived by principals and teachers, the quality of integration may suffer" (Hamilton, 1966, p. 16).

First Nations Control of Education

Initial movement towards First Nations controlling education for their children began in the early 1970s. In 1973, the Federal Government adopted the proposal of the National Indian Brotherhood to transfer administrative control of schools on reserve to the local band governments. First Nations control of schools include financial management, policy development, and implementation, personnel selection, and locally developed courses including culture and language teaching. These schools must meet provincial standards of curriculum, teacher certification, and course scheduling. First Nations schools are stringently monitored by Indian Affairs who maintain financial control.

This chapter reviewed current literature on the processes which have an effect on First Nations people including colonization, leadership, and a brief examination of the treatment of First Nations schooling practises. The next chapter describes the methodology used in this research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the design of the study, the development of the research instrument, validity and reliability, data sources and a description of the setting.

Design of the Study

The study can be described as a qualitative one. As noted by Biklen (1988) the term "qualitative research" is "an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics" (p.2). These characteristics include the collection of "soft" data in a natural setting and the description of the "meaning" held by those being studied. Burgess (1984) also emphasized that the term is used to refer to a range of research and writing which include "participant observation, in-depth, unstructured or semi-structured interviews which allow the researcher to learn first hand about the social world" (p. 2). Since the aim of this study was to gain understanding of what the First Nation's views are concerning their educational arrangement, the study was best carried out through the qualitative tradition. The nature of the data for the study was complex; thus qualitative study, which is considered flexible (Burgess, 1984), was found appropriate.

Development of the Research Instrument

An interview method was used to collect data for the study. The interview questions were developed after an extensive review of relevant literature. The interview questions were of the open-ended (unstructured) type. Although certain questions emanating from the literature review formed the bases of the interview, questions asked in the course of the interview depended on the issues raised by the respondents, level of knowledge of educational matters, and the willingness to provide information. Therefore, the format for the interview was relatively flexible.

Validity and Reliability

Validity is generally described as the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure while reliability entails the "level of internal consistency of stability of the measuring device over time" (Borg & Gall, 1984, pp. 280-281). In a qualitative study, several measures are recommended to meet the requirement of validity and reliability. These include triangulation, peer debriefing, member check, and thick description.

The collection of data from documents and from different respondents satisfied the triangulation requirements. In order to filter out or reduce personal biases of the researcher, efforts were made to check interpretations of data with colleagues who were interested in the study, thus fulfilling the requirement of peer debriefing.

Member checks with the respondents were done to ensure that interpretations truly reflected their statements. While an adequate effort was made to provide thick description of the setting, situation, and data involved in the study, it is not the primary objective of this study to offer generalizable conclusions.

Response effect, that is, "the tendency of the respondent to give inaccurate or incorrect responses or more precisely, the difference between the answer given by the respondent and the true answer" (Borg & Gal, p. 438), is identified as a major shortcoming of interview method. Since the researcher is a First Nation member, it was expected that the respondents would be comfortable to express themselves freely to the researcher. This effect was obvious and is to be presented in the setting description of this study.

Data Sources

Nine people were interviewed in this study. These people are considered to be representative key players in educational matters of the First Nations community. These players are:

1. Two politicians; the Chief of the reserve and the Councillor in charge of education,
2. The educational leaders; the chairman of the education committee, and two members of the first education committee,
3. Three parents who are community members, and

4. An elder resident of the reserve.

In the course of the interview exercise, efforts to include other respondents relevant to the study, had been considered. It was apparent that the initial list of respondents identified were sufficient to provide a picture of the reserve setting and its' educational arrangements. I had asked each interview participant to name other members of the community who may be useful respondents in this study. Any and all the individuals that were suggested by the people have been included as respondents.

Procedure for Data Collection

The Chief and Council were solicited for approval to do this study on the reserve. The procedure for this process involved the researcher addressing the Chief and Council during a meeting convened with a quorum present to hear the request. A copy of this proposal was provided prior to the meeting. The Chief and Council voted in favour of the researcher proceeding with the study and providing a final report upon completion of the research.

To conduct interviews with potential respondents, a letter was written through the Department of Educational Policy Studies to all the potential participants. The letter introduced the topic, the researcher and solicited participant approval to conduct the interview.

After their approval had been received, I contacted each participant to set up a date to be interviewed. Subsequent interviews were arranged during the first session

of interview if the need existed. All interviews were tape-recorded and a field note journal was kept at all times.

Data Analysis

Since the nature of the data is of the qualitative type, content analysis and general description of responses was conducted. Where applicable, efforts were made to support conclusions with relevant extracts from the respondents' oral responses.

Ethical Considerations

The Department of Educational Policy Studies requires that studies that involve human subjects meet certain ethical guidelines. Since this study did involve human participants and ethics review was submitted and approved, and all the ethical guidelines have been observed. These included the right of the respondents to withdraw at will and the promise of anonymity. These conditions were stated in the letter written to the respondents. Also, no names of individuals were directly linked to the data obtained and analysed.

Geographical and Political Setting

In the words of the respondents, the following description provides the background information for the purposes of this study. The setting description category was created by the words of the respondents and these words serve as codes

for this study. These codes are community players, processes, and unique features. Together these codes portray the reserve setting and delineate how education is perceived in the mind-set of the respondents.

In describing the reserve as a whole, the respondents use the word, "community". The community is considered to be the geographic boundaries which allow them to live and interact as a whole in identifying the reality of their existence. The reserve encompasses 3000 acres of land and is home to 1200 residents. The reserve is made up of families who are related on the basis of intermarriages over the years including people from other communities who also become related by marriage. There are 12 families whose surnames identify their kinship relatedness. The reserve was established in the late 1800's as a result of the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876. A Chief and Council of nine members is the governing body of the reserve as determined by the legislated Indian Act. Another commonality shared by the community is the language and cultural history, Plains Cree, which is an identity marker. The community described by the respondents shows the processes used in determining their patterns and roles and the relationships and interactions which exist there.

Hence, the reserve is a community of people who share a geographic local, a common identity, are related in kinship and engage in identifying their own reality. This framing of the community is descriptive of many reserves in Alberta. As a matter of fact, many reserves in Canada can be described by territory, language, and culture. For the reader new to the meaning of reserves in Canada, one respondent depicts this

understanding of community in relation to reserves in Canada whether in Alberta or Quebec. The respondent is describing the purpose of meaningful existence for native people,

> In order to accomplish something you have to believe that you are a part of this country, that you were here first. Then you have to start doing things according to the laws that were given to you. They (Mohawks) believe this is the way they were put here and this is the way that they are going to always be from one generation to another and they have a total commitment. They teach those little ones when they are this young that belief. And they are totally committed. If you teach a little one like this that he's white, he is going to believe you. If you never teach him anything about his culture then he is going to be one sorry lost kid by the time he is a teenager. He is going to be ashamed of his grandparents, he is going to be ashamed of the reserve.

The respondent used an example of a reserve (Mohawk) where the members are solidly determined to impart to their young children the meaning of identifying with the Mohawk world view. Later in the content of her words, she mentions that there is reason for commitment to relating identity formation to each generation. This reason for existence is based on the inherent law of being a First Nations member and is in her words a responsibility of the community. If this responsibiiity is not addressed by the generation of adults then there will be detrimental effects upon the individuals and the reserve community as a whole.

This notion of individual actions affecting the whole community is another factor which ascribes meaning to life on a reserve. This factor is basic to identity issues which ties people on a reserve together on the basis of a shared culture with a commonality of being first people. The culture of the community is tied in part to the traditional historical experiences still intact from older generations. It is also, however an expression of younger generations who have been influenced by present day experiences with non-native people with a base in modernity. Hence, a dichotomy appears between tradition and modernity and, depending on how the people decide to meld these world views, the concept of collectivity and individualism can serve as key to the quality of life in the community. It can be argued that each reserve in Canada is unique, based on its own experiences and manner in relating knowledge to solve this reality of competing world views.

The unique factors of the reserve in this study provide the flavour and depth to how the people view themselves and the processes regarding their interactions. The players and processes show the experiences which have shaped their definition of the world view particular to their community. The knowledge of the people and how this knowledge is shared is unique to this community setting.

The people interviewed shared candidly with me the knowledge which was linked by the concern over the education related activities of the community. I realized that in the moment of each interview, the hearts and minds of the respondents were open and the willingness to share their knowledge was unencumbered by pre-set

notions or expectations. I ensured each respondent that this study was theirs and that the findings were to be for their benefit. This was my commitment to the community which began by first approaching the Chief and Council for permission to do the field research. The leaders granted the study and welcomed the interest in their lives.

Once the door was open for the research to begin, interviews were scheduled over a period of six weeks. In addition to the interviews, I lived on site and moved freely within the community. Several visits to the reserve administration offices, department offices, school, the nearby tribal college, and public services such as the stores were made during this time. I also attended meetings of the community when these arose during the fieldwork observation period. Having freedom to move about in the community I was offered invitations and felt privileged to attend community events such as weddings, funerals, special occasion feasts, and round dances. The open door of the community as a peripheral onlooker afforded me an opportunity to behold the community's relation and extended family network.

Most of the reserve activities are focused in the centre of the community. Informally named, "Old Town" and "New Town", the central village area has a number of buildings randomly clustered on each side of the main highway which runs through the reserve. At the village centre members can access the administration building, recreation centre, social services centre, health centre, school, farm building, public works department, church, elder's centre, daycare centre, and two gas stations each with a convenience store. Additionally, there are many single unit homes and

multiplex apartment housing in the village site. Adjacent to the village site is a golf course which is owned and operated by the community and is a successful business venture.

The village site encompasses an area of approximately 100 acres of land. Surrounding the village are agriculturally mixed farms with residents' homes interspersed in the eight by eight kilometre section of reserve land. There are few private farms as most of the land is farmed by the community owned and operated farm enterprise. Throughout the land base there are oil and gas pumping stations which stand inactive as these no longer extract the natural resources from underground. Many of these pumps have been capped for a number of years and are remnants of a past decade when the royalties from the oil were communally shared on a per capita basis.

Participants in the study consistently described community members into groupings of residents, aside from family groupings which are basically attributed to the normative structure of the community. The informal structures of the community groupings are ascribed roles and functions such as leadership, elders, young people, school committee, and parents. Leadership roles are in reference to those members of the reserve who are elected to a two year term in the positions of chief and council. Most often, references to leadership are ascribed to the leaders who have been in office for different terms. Therefore, the leadership must be considered in a time related function of community events. The elders are basically a static group of people

who have reached a certain age. "There are only seven elders over 70 and there are about 15 over 55" (years of age), stated a respondent who had worked with the elders' group. It is important to note that the term "elder" is defined differently in each First Nations community. Young people are a group of individuals who are under the age of 25 years. The school committee are members who have volunteered to serve on the loosely structured system which has been operating since 1974. There were a number of people who had served in this capacity over the years. Parents are all people in the community with children in schools and this grouping is used most often in conjunction with school related issues.

The respondents who willingly participated in the study represented a cross section of the community in terms of roles held. Leaders participated in the study, as did community members who play a role in education through the education committee. Parents who have children and grandchildren attending schools or educational institutions also became involved. An elder's perspective was taken into consideration and one elder respondent who has lived on the reserve all of her life was approached to participate in an interview.

Interviews were conducted in respondents' homes and places of work. A level of welcome and acceptance was felt during each interview. Each interview began by introducing myself, an explanation of the research, and an explanation of the ethical considerations. These ethical considerations were shared verbally and in a letter which was kept by each participant. Often respondents asked about my kinship affiliation

and place of origin. In setting the atmosphere for the interview, a bit of humour and easy laughter was shared between myself and the respondent. Humour is a characteristic shared by all First Nations which serves to ease tension, create an atmosphere of friendship, and ensure that cultural mores are observed and understood. Where interviews were held in the residents' home, a pot of tea was always offered. All interviews were tape recorded with permission sought beforehand. Once the interview scenario was set, the respondent and I began a most valuable discourse.

Questions were arranged in a pre-determined order. Of the nine questions, the first three sought to determine the participant's past and present affiliations in educational services, position or role in the community, and length of time living in the community. These questions served to credit the participant's knowledge of the community and educational related activities, services and involvement over time. They also served to ease the participant into the next six questions which were specific to determine their knowledge of the educational needs, concerns, and desires of the community. During the interview, I asked prompting questions based on the respondent's information in order to understand precisely the meaning of the words and concepts being discussed.

At my request, the term *education* was to be considered as a life-long process. This broad definition of education was considered important to the depth of this study as schooling is only one component of the term. In order to ascertain the people's educational needs, concerns, and desires, the philosophic view of native people in

relation to education was strategically used. Native people view life as a continuous learning process from birth to death. One respondent, prior to discussing this issue, provided the following information on this philosophy of life-long education:

> I guess the white man's education is never finished either. It's what the elders tell you; in your lifetime you're not going to learn everything that you need to about Indian law. You start from when you're young and until 80 to 90 years old, you're still learning. There's different instances, different happenings as you go along, but what you learned when you were small, when you get to be this age, then you have that instant recall situation as it was talked about back then. Then you know there's a way you got to, it's like there's a big giant key. You've got to have that key to turn that lock, into that wisdom, into that hall of wisdom. And that's the best way that I can explain it to you. When an old man or an old woman tells you, you've done good, you've finally got it together, you've finally got it straight. Then when they tell you that, when you're doing something or you're speaking somewhere,... it's just like them handing you a great big certificate from the university of Indian law school. It's a great feeling. And all the university papers and degrees will never match what you have learned in your own culture.

Institutional learning in schools is considered in this world view as a component of this process. The quality of life as perceived by the participants will take into account the educational needs, concerns, and desires which will include

institutionalized learning.

Many of the interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour in length and one interview lasted longer than one hour. This interview had to be held over two separate meetings due to the nature of the respondents' responsibilities which came first. All of the interview tapes were transcribed and a field journal was kept to write down the circumstances and observations of the interviews. The journal was also maintained over the observational period on site. This journal is a record of the events and changes which occurred over time and is incorporated into the data analysis within each of the identified categories. The interviews and journal create the data base for this study and the description of the participants' view of themselves as members to this reserve community who are rich with experience and knowledge.

In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the data generated from the activities mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Collection of data concentrated on determining the educational needs, concerns, and desires of the reserve. In reviewing the literature, the *Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education* (1987) study was identified as being a useful document in determining expectations and recommendations for educational services directed to native people in general. I wanted to know whether or not its findings were relevant to the educational needs and concerns of the people on this particular reserve.

Responses revealed the informants' understanding of the immediate situation on the reserve as it related to educational services. I have chosen to present this data in three broad categories;

1. Unique characteristics of the reserve,
2. Present educational concerns, and
3. Educational desires.

The scenario of this reserve will include the features which respondents considered as unique. The educational needs of the people represent their reflections upon the quality of reserve life over time. Educational concerns include issues which suggest present actions and reactions to educational services. The educational desires

expressed are requirements for future educational planning which will hopefully ensure that expected outcomes contribute to the overall quality of life on this reserve.

Throughout this presentation of the findings, time links are included as a reference to where the people are in relation to education. As this research considers the significance of listening to people express their own world view, a basic premise is that only these people who have lived experience in the community can suggest how, what, and why educational services have affected their positions in life in the past, present, and future. These findings are relevant to consider and can be useful determinants and benchmarks for educational planners to utilize in assisting the community to assume responsibility and ownership of education.

Part I: Characteristics Unique to this Community

Characteristics which determine the uniqueness of the community are presented in this section of the data presentation. These characteristics set this reserve apart from other reserves as distinctive in relation to community reality and how the people have determined to deal with these challenges as a whole. The close proximity of the reserve to a large city and a period of abundant financial resources are problem-posing and advantage factors which determine how the people have learned to perceive the uniqueness of their reality.

Proximity to Large Urban Centre

The reserve is located on the boundary of a large city in Alberta. The location

of the reserve was determined in 1894 at which time the boundary city was a fledgling town. Growth and expansion of the city has now reached the east side of the reserve where rural residents of the reserve are neighbours to the urban suburb dwellers. In describing the reality of the situation, one respondent stated, "We're 1200 people, 20 minutes from downtown (large city) and we're going to have more and more influences in our lives". Another respondent qualified the potential for accommodating the proximity issue by providing advice given to her by her grandmother, "She said, just try and learn to live beside the white man but never try to be like him". This advice would seem to be a way that people on the reserve may attempt to curb the influence of urbanization.

Accessibility to urban amenities has created problems and limiting situations for the people of the reserve. "The influence of the proximity of this band to (large city) for instance lends even more to the fact that how do I want to put this, the influence of external sources on our people here." These influences have been found to be those which would have a huge effect on the pace of the lifestyle resulting from new ideas, methods, and means of solving problems. Other influences affecting the people on the reserve are the introduction of addictive substances and exposure to services which are not readily accessible to more remote communities.

Access to Urbanized Lifestyle

Access to an urbanized lifestyle has interfered substantially with the close-knit traditional lifestyle characterized by the Cree. One respondent in describing the

accessibility to urban lifestyles states, "The way it is today anyway, a lot of people have moved in and out of the city back and forth," suggesting that the pace of life is fast as a result of, "being close to the city, a big urban area." The pace is equated by one respondent as, "it's the pace that the world is going at today, what they see on T.V. or video games or whatever." Regarding pace of life one respondent mentioned another factor which can be applied to the fast moving change of pace as it applies to a sense of identity. She mentions, "They didn't think very much about themselves, their language, and their culture at the time to begin with to have thrown it away so quick. And that was in the 1950s."

Intermarriages

Another influence has been intermarriages between and across cultural lines. A respondent described how this occurrence has affected the reserve residents as " there's a lot of white people in this community. White people that married and they brought their attitudes and they were here to save us Indians from ourselves. A lot of them are still here, they're growing older with us. They are not any richer or any smarter than the rest of the community. They just more or less slack down and they try and fit." In the situation of change in the community lifestyle to accommodate a closer fit, she mentioned that, "we've tried for years and years to try and fit into the white society...we've been trying to fit into the white man's shoes...which is more like it because we've been walking in his shadow."

Living in Two Worlds

The problems associated with changing the Cree lifestyle to accommodate an encroaching lifestyle of another culture has been approached with various solutions. One respondent states that:

> The old people said, you have two worlds you've got to live in. Two. The white man's world and the Indian world. You can be a very good person if you can pick the good out of the both worlds.

The view of the community people has not been one of deciding as a whole as to how to conduct the transition. It has been a matter of "an individual choice. An individual chooses." "It all depends on that person's choice." Another respondent states, "we can't be an island anymore. And the children have to be prepared for the concrete jungle."

The reality of making a decision has been fierce in that there was no way of backing out of choosing to change lifestyle. The flow of movement to and from the city is in both directions. People from the community moved into the city, and city people moved into the reserve. There appears to be very little restriction on the movement of urban influence onto the reserve. A respondent confirms this observation with, "A lot of other people, like other Indians who live in town, they influence the people here too, they come out here."

The reality of the people then is that they have limited individual choice about adopting influences from an urban lifestyle. The respondents by consensus agree by

their statements that the choices made have brought more negative influences into their environment. "They bring whatever they are practising whatever lifestyles they are practising, they get involved with our people." The ease of movement on and off reserve has compounded the situation. "For instance, our resident population is 1200 but our membership population on the reserve is 700 so there is a lot of other influences," offers one respondent when speaking about the open boundaries of the reserve.

Negative Influences of Addictive Substances and Behaviour

The negative influences of drugs, alcohol, inhalant abuse, and gambling have been identified. These influences are now a part of the community lifestyle:

> Our people pick up those habits: drugs, alcohol, sniffing, substance abuse, whatever. That has a major role. The kids out here started sniffing about 1968 or 1969. And that all started because of an outsider coming in to sell the stuff. And he got the kids hooked, he used to practically give it away and that time it was nail polish remover...and drugs...were just coming in cause you could just get them so easily in the city.

Individual choice has meant, "a lot of people going to the bingo, a lot people going to the casino", and "the mall", as an outlet for utilizing leisure time. Unfortunately for some, "the fact that the parents go to afternoon bingo,...they go to evening bingos," these conveniences turn into addictions, such as gambling addiction. In relation to alcohol addiction, this problem has been in existence for the longest

number of years. A respondent claims:

> A lot of our problems in this community have to do with alcoholism. And as far as I can remember, way back,...every household drank, everybody. So I think that's a number one problem.

This respondent traced the problem back to the 1920s during the time of restricted movement off and on the reserve by the Indian Affairs agent:

> I remember my grandfather telling us that there was no way you could get off this community. No way at all. You had to get a letter to get out. And the minute they got a little bit of money they'd go to buy the liquor right away. So it started probably right away in the 1930s, 1920s.

The respondent suggest that the reason for the addictions was due to the segregation of the community from the rest of society.

Although this respondent did not believe the addictions issue to place the community in a position of uniqueness, she later contends that the unique situation of the reserve's proximity to these influences now has shaped the lifestyle of the people profoundly:

> In that way, I think we are unique being so close to the city. It's always there, no matter if it's twelve o'clock at night or four in the morning, it's always there.

The question posed by this scenario, is why has this proximity had a detrimental affect on the community in relation to problems with addictions? Many communities

struggle with this same issue as well. The second unique feature of this particular community provides some answers and helps shed more light in the reality of the lifestyle.

Oil Royalties

The community changed quickly during a period of time when there was accessibility to abundant financial resources. This period of time was between 1976 and 1983, when oil was being extracted from their land base. The royalties from this natural resource were, in the style of collective ownership, dispersed to the membership on a per capita basis and held in trust for the collective interests of the people by the Chief and Council. Royalty money was handled by the leadership who invested in shared business ventures and capital investments on the reserve. A percentage was distributed to every family with intentions of improving the quality of their lives. Families were entitled to equal monthly royalty payments depending on the number of dependents the head of the household had.

This unique factor is described by a respondent as causing, "a dramatic change in our social status and that social status was sort of marked by our financial status." He further states, "at one time, this band was a wealthy band." For the period of time that the oil revenues were high, many of the people experiencing the advantages of this new found wealth were adjusting and creating new lifestyles. For instance, a household of six could look forward to receiving a monthly income of approximately twenty-four hundred dollars a month. During the 1970s and early 1980s, this income

was enough to live comfortably on. The introduction of accessibility to financial resources has had a profound impact on the reserve.

Money was spent to improve the community infrastructure, build more homes, invest in business ventures on and off the reserve, land and to purchase livestock for the collective good of the community. As well, the money was used to create new jobs so more individuals could have employment.

Money came to be seen as a panacea for the people. A respondent states, "We had a lot of money and we were able to buy a lot of things. We were able to buy a lot of feelings. Buy a lot of things to fill the gaps in our lives." Money that went to the people was spent at their own discretion. As the respondent states, the money filled a void for the people.

Creation of Dysfunction

The people's exposure to addictions-related problems had by this time created dysfunction in the home environment. A respondent claimed, "there's problem families out here and parents don't know how to understand...". Gambling addictions created some of these difficulties, "so we have a lot of bingo orphans for instance." Other difficulties arise with parenting, one respondent mentioned, "in this society here, you have kids having kids". In terms of mental well-being a general description of the people as reported by one respondent is, "there's too many band people out here that have got a low self esteem of themselves". "Crisis" situations appear to be common place and the leadership, agency, and family support systems are geared towards this

end, "they (families) are concerned about perhaps family crisis or social problems" was echoed amongst several of the respondents.

There are other factors where the availability to financial resources caused problems for the people. The creation of jobs during the oil royalty decade caused many young people to drop out of school to vie for newly created job positions. A respondent marks this point as, "that's around about the time too our council lowered the working age to sixteen. And they were making a lot of money like all these sixteen year olds...were making 12 to 15 bucks an hour, in some cases it was 20 dollars an hour." A younger member of the community responded with, "It was 1975 or 1976 they decided to hire students like 16, even under 16, drop outs. Hire them as band employees rather than having them go back to school."

This hiring practise created a dangerous shift and precedent for the young people who were in school. The same respondent states, "there was conflict now. I mean, when you're growing up you want to have things and we saw other kids making money not doing nothing, practically doing nothing and getting paid for it. And here we are struggling, so a lot of us took that route. Make more money so we could have a good time". This sentiment of easy money and dependency on the reserve leadership to look after the people lingers into the 1990s. A respondent laments about this lingering sense of dependency:

> See, most of these people when they grow up here they expect the band to do everything for them. They think the band owes them....we have to give them

jobs, never mind education, they'll get a job anyway. That's the kind of attitude they have.

This respondent mentioned that the effects of the precedent setting hiring practises are still visible today in the people's attitudes.

Responsibility is placed on the leadership to do something, "now if you want to correct it, it affects some families out here. It's a hard thing to do." The long term effects of this practise is echoed by another respondent who states, "and their frustration is, there is so many positions available on the reserve, because they've (drop outs) been working there for such a long time that they're like part of the furniture, you can't throw them out."

In the decade of the available of financial resources one other point which characterizes the uniqueness of this community is their *spunk*. During the phase of the oil royalty revenues, the attitude of the leadership towards the helpfulness of the Indian Affairs Department shifted. Two respondents mentioned that Indian Affairs played a low profile during this period. "For two years they (Indian Affairs) didn't even pay for our health. Our band had opted right out of all the treaty rights." Another respondent stated that "this band began to venture out on its own and take a few chances, go against certain authorities at that time, Department of Indian Affairs, so they reached out and they started doing things on their own. So when that started, they started to gain more ground and gain more confidence, gain more things, learn by trial and error." The department therefore refused to assist the reserve membership, "because

they said we were too rich and we could afford to pay for ourselves," one respondent stated. "The hell with you federal government people, the leadership said that" was a statement attesting to the will of the leaders who were tired of arguing with the federal officials.

Shifting Lifestyles

The community went through various periods which created opportunities to experience a multitude of lifestyle changes. The current situation of the reserve must be considered in view of these past events which have had a great impact on the way the people respond and interact to problems, situations, and with each other. The reserve is considered to be a unique community due to its close proximity to a city, to influences of modernity at their door step, to privileges offered by a limited financial resource pool, and all the problems associated with these periods of adjustment. Their history together has been relatively short and they have struggled through many good times and hard times. All of these experiences have served to shape their new world view.

Having presented the data identifying the unique characteristics of the reserve, a background for the next chapter has been set. The next chapter involves the crux of the study in that the educational needs, concerns, and desires of the people will be portrayed in accord and beyond the limitations described by the *Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education* Study (1987).

Part II: Educational Background

In this section, I will analyse the findings from interviews conducted at this reserve community. The community has been the site of significant changes in educational delivery over the last six decades. The community has also experienced significant cultural upheaval with resulting lifestyle changes. I want to look at these changes as they relate to the educational needs of the community. "The transition from my parent's generation, to my generation, to the generation after me and the next one. My children are like the fourth generation here in terms of education", says one parent of these changes in educational delivery. It seems that educational delivery has always been from outside forces deciding on behalf of the community. In the one instance where there was an attempt to engage the community in actively participating in the delivery of educational services, breakdown in communication resulted in a unilateral decision being made by the leadership without the full support of the community.

The thrust of this study has been to start with where the people are in terms of their needs, concerns, and desires. This knowledge is to be utilized for the benefit of the community to begin to involve them in the process of determining how to solve their own problems in the area of education. "They just need somebody who's willing to sit down and listen" says a respondent. The people's voice must be heard. The knowledge of the people can then be utilized to proceed in a manner which will serve

to make the most of that knowledge. In collecting the data, I looked for historical relevance in addressing present education needs.

An Historical Perspective: The Residential School

Earliest formal schooling for this reserve community's residents was provided by residential schools. The Indian Act of 1951 legislated that all native children between the ages of six and sixteen attend schools. The children were taken from their parents and transported to the nearest residential school that had available space. The people were not consulted to gain their approval. By law, any parent who did not comply could be jailed.

This forced educational situation has had devastating effects on the reserve. Removed from their homes, culture, and parental figures, children learned new methods of survival. "When I was five I went to school in Blue Quills Residential school, I was there for seven years", one respondent remarks about his early school experience. Children learned to adapt to a harsh reality or face demeaning consequences. They learned to distrust themselves as native people and were taught to disdain their language, and their culture. One respondent mentioned her experience in a convent, "I had to through necessity (it was not a choice as to) whether I wanted to or not, I had to learn French because that is what they spoke in the school". Another respondent speaks about the elders' schooling as, "some of them that were in convents were abused or they were told not to speak their language." They became indoctrinated into a new culture, religion, and language in an institutional setting. The

education was simply, "imposed," with an ultimate goal of assimilation in mind.

One respondent believed that the residential school experience did not affect her as dramatically. She speaks of others who tend to blame the residential school for all of their problems:

> Like this one Indian was going to school, so he threw his culture away, he wanted to learn. So he let himself get brainwashed, he had to let himself get brainwashed because whatever you learned when you are small, you'll never forget. No matter how high you go, no matter how educated you get, you'll always go back to your roots. There's nobody that can take that away from you.

This respondent suggests that the people tend to view the residential school experience from a victimized role. She quotes others' experiences she has listened to as, "because the nuns and priests hurt me so bad" in asserting their religion through prayer, and "you know they are so full of prayer that they are lost." The excuse used by the people for their failure to live in accord with a set of values is not taken seriously by this respondent:

> But if they had believed in the prayer and what the values that were being taught in that church were, if they believed hard enough they would not have broken that law.

Although this respondent did not consider the residential schools to be the reason for the lack of language and cultural values on the reserve, she was affected

in another way. "The hardest part for me was because I was very close to my parents that we had been taken away from." The experience from home to residential school was totally different. It took time to adjust. Traumatized, I guess".

Also the experience was different for her in comparison to others because she arrived at the residential school at the age of nine years. By this time she knew her language fluently and her cultural understanding was developed. She emphasizes that "nobody can take your language away once you learned it....once you've learned the language you'll never forget it."

When young people were released from the residential school at the age of sixteen, they were not prepared to earn a comfortable living. "They were only allowed to go up to grade eight and that was it, they were kicked out", says a respondent in speaking about the generation of people who attended residential schools. A respondent stated that, "I was in the convent for quite some time before I had a place to go out." Meaning that she had no place to go to when she reached the age of 16. She was released from the school when a "family started to look after me".

During this period, Indian students were not allowed to move beyond grade nine. Taking on menial labour jobs and utilizing welfare programs were their means of survival for a period of time. In 1959, one respondent stated that there was "80 per cent illiteracy...people couldn't read or write, maybe sign their

name", attesting to residential school outcomes. Literacy was secondary to working, "just labour in there", a respondent said of the educational experience at residential school.

A Shift in Residential School Philosophy

A shift in education began to occur as a result of some students completing grade eight at an early age. "I was 12 years old and already in grade eight, I had spent four years milking cows" said one respondent.

> That's when they decided because there was a lot of young people...that were finished there. They had to send us someplace because there was more and more of us that were just going to be there doing nothing that we were just going to be standing around.

These schools were mandated to keep Indian students in school until they were sixteen years old. As a result, the government (INAC) signed tuition agreements with public boards of education in the 1950s.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada then built a school on the reserve in the 1930s. This school included grades one to seven. Aside from the residential school, this on-reserve day school was the only school that the people could attend. After finishing grade seven on the reserve, "you had to quit school. You were only 12 years old but you'd have to quit in grade seven" said one respondent on how education was delivered at this time. This school operated for the people until it burned down in 1957. After this, children were transported by bus to the nearest public schools. "At

the beginning when the white people began to accept the Indian people that integrated into their schools, they were no longer in segregation. They made it so hard and they limited it."

Integrated Schooling

Thus a new era in the educational delivery of this reserve started on a precarious footing. Integration into public schools was implemented by a unilateral decision of INAC. Once again the situation of integration was an imposed method of educational delivery. Reserve residents were not consulted in making this change.

In reflecting about this period, one respondent said, "there was a lot of problems with that integration." The problems identified with integration were discrimination, drop outs, difficulty adjusting, and lack of supervision. "A lot of our teachers were discriminatory, they made really bad remarks in our classrooms. But we stayed" said one respondent who finished grade 12 in a public school. The reason for her success in completing high school is attributed to the fact that she had her identity intact.

> I felt good about myself going to a white man's school because I knew who I was as an Indian. I had my own language, I had my own understanding. Now I was ready to face his and it was a challenge.

Some people successfully completed grade 12 during this period. A respondent who is about 40 years old states, "earlier when our kids were being bussed to the city for education, there seemed to be more of a drive from our people that were my

generation. They're the ones that went to grade 12."

This sentiment of "a drive" from the people to encourage attendance in schools is echoed by other respondents. The people who are now in the 60 year age category saw that education was an opportunity for the young people to turn their lives around.

> You see there was a movement back then when I was a teenager trying to go to high school, the old Indians figured that if you go and talk English and you go and get a good education then you'll make it out of this reserve, you'll have a better job in white society....And that's the only word they knew that was their highest word, education. And there was a drive to educate all the young people at that time.

The elders knew that education was a path to job attainment and earning a living. Education was also "pushed" as a way to upgrade the entire community. Elders wanted the young people to come back to help them learn the ways of the rest of society. A respondent reveals the reasoning as such, "My grandmother sent me to school to try and learn the white man's ways so I could interpret it to her. Why the white man acts the way he does and she couldn't understand." She continued, "She reminded me then, because you're going to school you might go on to get an education, never forget who you are. *Never forget who you are.*" The same respondent carried on describing the drive to become educated as, "You can go and learn the white man's way to help to better your life and to fit into the surrounding communities. You can talk for us when you grow big because we can't talk to the

white people. We don't understand their ways so if you go over there and understand their ways then you can come back and you can teach us so we can better understand them." Because they said, "The white man will never come here to try and learn about us, to learn why we're here and why we do things like the way we do. He's too proud to come and I don't think they'll ever come"

The elders were re-evaluating their reality. The way of education would allow them to learn English fluently "because they didn't understand and they had to deal with the white people in the surrounding community". Their drive to educate the young people to learn the ways of their neighbours "so you had to get along with him" set a goal that was obtainable.

Loss of Culture and Language

This new reality did not include cultural retention. A clash between education and language retention occurred. For many people this dilemma was viewed as a no-win situation.

It was believed that language teaching must stop in order to ensure that the children who were to be schooled could speak English fluently enough to succeed. "So our children could get a head start" in school was the reasoning for switching from Cree to English in the homes. This reality proved the urgency of the elders' desire to ensure that their children could have a better opportunity in life. A respondent speaks of this time:

The parents from that time, half of their kids spoke their language, and the

other half didn't. This is where you get these big families of ten, the older ones talk real good native language, the other five don't understand one word. That's how it split the families. And I always thought that it was because of the lack of understanding on the part of the Indian community. They didn't think very much of themselves, their language, and their culture at that time to begin with to have thrown it away so quick. And that was in the 1950s.

The language of the community began to quickly erode during these years. The younger generations learned English and were not expected to learn their own language. A respondent says that at this time, "they didn't talk their language and they spoke broken English".

Discrimination

On discrimination that was experienced in the integrated schools, one respondent states, "I and lots of others were always being called 'dirty Indian', 'savages' whatever". This created problems with the students' ability to fit in and belong in the school. The result was that many students dropped out. "We had been fighting all of these years from grade one to six, we were fighting for who we were," one parent said in describing one coping mechanism the students utilized to fit into school.

I found that almost all the children of this community dropped out of school during this period. A respondent observed that, "I know in this community...we have such a high drop out rate." Lacking the necessary parental backing and community involvement, most children become frustrated with the system and consequently quit

school. A respondent noted that, " a lot of the people here are old drop outs". In fact, it was observed that during this period it was considered "unusual or strange" not to drop out. Dropping out had been seen as the natural end of their educational endeavour.

The issue of drop outs was to be addressed by the community in 1969 with the creation of an educational committee. "At that time there were three of us....We tried to act as a liaison between the department (INAC) and the schools and the children," a respondent who was involved spoke about her role. We "took it upon ourselves to try to keep close contact with...nine elementary schools the children were going to at that time." Another parent who was involved in this committee said, "I was concerned with the high drop out rate in the city. It was fine to a point till the student was into junior high or high school." It was at this point when the students would start skipping school. "This is where most of the student got lost in the city", the parents concurred about this trend. These liaison people hoped to provide direction to the students "to make the right choice" about their schooling. All the respondents indicated that dropping out of school posed a significant problem in the community during the era of integration into the city schools.

Local Control

The next movement which would change the situation completely occurred as a result of dissatisfaction with the integration experience and resulted in the subsequent community action of 1973. A newly formed committee of concerned

members attempted to do something about the educational situation. A respondent who was involved stated,

> I was on that committee for about five years from 1973 to 1978. That's when the people used to get together. Leaders and the people in general used to get together to talk about education. Integration mostly. Problems that we were encountering, our children were encountering with these schools surrounding the community.

This process of consultation initiated early discussions of how the people could build a school in the community. In discussing the need for a new school, the people decided that they could provide educational delivery better for their children if they worked together. Respondents said there was a belief that the "federal government was supposed to provide for us on the reserves because that's one right that we have under the Treaties" One respondent recalls this process, "We started negotiating with various levels of government as to how we could provide this level of education for our students who at that time were attending schools off the reserve." And another parent stated, "rather then sending them off the reserve, have them in elementary school here because to a certain extent you can control your children when they're young".

The committee made great efforts to pursue the opportunity of building a new school. A breakdown occurred amongst the committee members when the issue over choosing between an elementary or secondary school was placed upon them. "But

then it didn't work, we didn't all agree" said one member of this committee. The committee began to lose support and became disjointed. As a result the leadership made a decision to join in with the nearby county school board. "This school was built on...young people's consent. We didn't have a total referendum to say what kind of school we wanted. At the beginning they said it was going to be native controlled and it was for the first two years until they signed it over...the county wasn't about to pay the Indians to teach their little kids. They wanted to have some control over the curriculum over the whole thing, so when we went broke, we didn't have any money, so they took it over. I think it was 1983-1984 that they signed that BCR (Band Council Resolution) giving responsibility or total control over to the county. The administration, the whole thing all the responsibilities to them."

In 1977, the school was built by the joint efforts of the reserve, the county, and INAC. The school was built on surrendered reserve land and controlled by the county board with input from community members. Students from neighbouring acreages attended the school with the reserve children. This effort was considered as integrating non-native students with native students.

The school started with a mixed enrollment of native and non-native students. The ratio at the start was "about 74-75% non-native children and about...25-30% native children" at the school, said one respondent. The school was staffed with a majority of county employed teachers and administrators. The reserve controlled the Early Childhood programs and hired the teachers for these two classrooms. One

reserve community member taught one class and the other class was taught by a non-native teacher who had a native teaching assistant. The counsellor and janitors were native members of the reserve as well. The community requested that the Cree language be taught in the school so a credentialed native teacher was hired for that purpose.

The school began operations under the auspices of the county during the period of time when the reserve was experiencing monetary benefits of oil revenues. "Our community lost its Indian identity in the heydays of the band when we had oil money and all that," remarked one respondent. The attitude in the community towards education at this time were secondary to the new found wealth the members were enjoying. People appeared to view education as operating on its own. It was regarding this point that one respondent gave his view of education being secondary. He recalls speaking with the administrator at that time and remarking about the flavour of this attitude:

> I told him back in 1978-79 that we're going to lose probably five generations of students before we have any measure of success at the school. We're starting to see more and more people interested in their children's education. It's unfortunate that concern (for education) is still secondary to other things.

The "other things" were conceded to be "identity, ignorance, and conflicts within the community" by this respondent. Identity corresponds to the deterioration of a common knowledge about their ancestry and denotes confusion and the existence of

a generation gap. Ignorance relates to the state of non-involvement in the educational sphere of their children's lives. Conflict in the community has been attributed to the lack of an organized response to the problems observed in the educational system.

Part III: Present Educational Concerns

The respondents' general view of their educational reality during the period of economic change (1976 to 1982) has led to their present day concerns. The major concern of identity, covers a range of issues that have a significant impact on the delivery, role, and structure of educational services. The identity issue was considered to be the main concern and therefore became the major theme when addressing present educational endeavours.

Identity

The information detects a lack of understanding resulting from enormous influences in the lives of the people. Identity crisis is seen to be an all encompassing obsession of the respondents whose lives are in a state of turmoil. "One day they're Indian and the next day they are not. If that's not crisis, I don't know what is," said one respondent. Elders advice prior to this period was in the manner of "never forget who you are", and points to the importance of identity retention as an early warning for the people. The changes that ensued over the years culminated in an overwhelming loss in identity.

Identity is strongly tied to the language. Once a language is lost, the marked

identity of the people begins to fade. A respondent concurs with this statement, "You lose your identity once you don't speak your native tongue so when they start speaking their native tongue, then they'll have that identity. The big problem is right now they don't have that identity. We're a lost society in this world right now."

> This statement affirms the need for nationhood and language retention:
>
> We hear our leaders talk about sovereignty. We have that. The elders still do believe that we have our nationhood. And we do have sovereignty, they do. Not the future generations. Not the future generations because they don't have a language, they don't have a religion, and they don't have what it takes to make a nation...We have to learn our languages, we have to teach our young in order to claim that.

What is Cultural Identity?

The cultural identity of the people in the community is described as a way of life. "Indian culture I believe is the way we live. From the very beginning, our children, from the time they're born, the very first day they get to know what's going on, that's identity," states one respondent about his view of cultural identity. Another respondent views "the value of life" as the apex of this identity. "I've got my life...understanding is from my heart, my feelings" she adds. In describing the state of the community and education, "They (membership) have no understanding of education or the value of life. The value of life, the importance of life here". Another respondent ties education into culture as, "the manner in which we were brought up.

the culture, the identity...education didn't hold a high priority at least academic education." This statement describes culture as all encompassing and differentiates academic education as something different from cultural knowledge.

To the people of this reserve, culture has feeling, meaning, and values. One respondent who reasons, "I have never lost my identity for one minute" states that, "in culture, you know, it covers a whole way of life." She continues, "I've been very defensive over my identity, of who I am and what I believe in whether it's politically or if it has to do with religion." In her schooling experiences she recalls that she, "had some very bad scraps with the teachers because of religion and what they said about some dances (being) evil...having feasts they said was evil. You're worshipping false gods and everything. I argued...my point....but I thought that the white man has been imposing a lot of things on us and taking away in the process. We've been saying that for a long time, that the white man has been imposing his value systems, his education on us, and now it's their turn to try and understand and know a little about the Indian."

The loss of identity cannot be used as a blanket statement to cover the whole reserve as the elders are considered to still have language, values, and knowledge of the culture. A respondent describes the situation as this,

> "It seems to be there's a void or a gap someplace, where between the elderly people and then as it trickles down in years....fewer and fewer people know the language and then beyond that as you go lower in ages, nobody even knows what culture is, what the values are, and like that whole age range, I don't

know what it is, 50, maybe below 50."

The identity gap is perceived as a problem that the community needed to address.

The school on the reserve was seen as an avenue for the people to regain culture through teaching the youngsters in the classroom. "That was the purpose of the school, that was one of the foundations. We keep our children here and we teach them our culture and we teach them our language and we teach them who they are what they are and we prepare them to be strong as an individual as a native person." However, this reality was not considered to be important by the neighbouring communities as there were non-native students to consider. The thrust of the reserve community to teach culture in the school was met by "the surrounding communities, especially the women (who) have been very verbal. Their children were wasting their time going to this school, learning about culture, when it's not going to help them in the future," recalls one respondent. As tax payers, the surrounding community people "don't want to pay 1200 dollars a year to pay for it...they say it's a waste of time".

This respondent thought that the nature of the school would make a breakthrough for the next generation to understand each other. Another respondent mentioned, "I'm all for maintaining the Indian identity, but I think it's so critical for our children and the non-native children to respect each other, and the parents need to work together." This sentiments of these two respondents are the same on the benefits the school could have on bridging understanding between cultures. "I thought that there was some hope in the future, the next how many generations would have

understanding of each other". This approach of mixing two cultures, native and non-native students, into one school to create an environment of understanding between them was relinquished after "the first two or three years". A respondent said, "after that it just got wiped out because they said we're just wasting our time teaching Indians to be Indians."

The respondents all viewed the school as the vehicle to provide the learning opportunities for the children to be taught their cultural uniqueness as First Nations people. However, this did not occur and caused some loss of support in the school by members of the community. The respondents claims are similar to other communities as written in the *Native People's Views* Study of 1987. The views of this community are similar to Native people across the province in the reporting of the teachers' knowledge of First Nations culture, parental involvement, representation in decision making, and support for the schools in meeting their needs.

Knowledge of the First Nations Culture by the Teachers

This respondents in this study noted similar issues of concern as identified by the people of the Alberta study. The teachers in the school were identified as lacking the knowledge and understanding of First Nations people. A setback was that school personnel were mostly non-native people who did not have an understanding or an appreciation of the reserve culture. In describing this scenario, the respondents claim that the intention of some of the school personnel was good. They tried to teach culture but, "the only knowledge that they have is what they read in a book", stated

one respondent. Another respondent agreed that teachers base their knowledge of culture on, "just what they read and what they study, and they figure that all Indians are the same." The result was that the teachers who attempted to teach culture in school were in fact misguiding the students and creating more confusion.

The school was teaching culture at one point and the respondent arranged to visit the classroom with another native person who wanted to see how they were teaching culture to the students. What they saw was a mixture of Indian "symbols", "colours", "paintings", "books" and "it is everything, it's just all mixed up". The respondent continues on that the content of the teaching is "more degrading than something to be proud about, that stereotyping of Indians was brought out more...I don't think that the values were brought out...only the bad that they did." This created more confusion and discomfort for the students and "they didn't feel good about themselves", replied the respondent.

The general opinion of all the respondents at this time was that the teachers in the school were basically ignorant of the community people. They believe that the teachers ought to have a better understanding by becoming more involved with the community. "I find that the teachers...are there from eight to four (o'clock) and then they go home. I find that they do their job and then they go home", a respondent said. They also believe that inservice training of the teachers was a need to create cross-cultural awareness and understanding.

Another area of concern which is found in both the respondents of this study

and those of the Alberta study was in parental involvement. The respondents had a tendency to blame this situation on their own lack of understanding of the educational system. Thus, the ignorance which is attributed to this section is identified as a concern held by almost all of the respondents.

Ignorance

The second problem experienced resoundingly in the community was the ignorance which was felt about the educational system. The people describe ignorance as stemming from the lack of knowledge about the system of education operating on the reserve. Several attempts to involve the people in the educational service was met with indifference, frustration, and lack of esteem about their roles in the school.

Indifference was one way the people responded to the call for involvement. A school committee existed then, "but the couldn't get any involvement from the community so they became frustrated and fell apart at the seams" said one respondent. A school committee was formally recognized by the Chief and Council in 1987 according to one of the leaders. The committee was established by volunteers in the community.

They made several attempts to establish a more receptive climate in the school for parent involvement to ease tensions between students and teachers. The school has an open door policy to the community but appears to have difficulty in maintaining parent interest. One parent describes the school climate as, "it's not a comfortable feeling, it's not that I'm not made welcome there, but there seems to be so much

hassling". Another parent felt discouraged from going to the school. "But if I meddle too much then again...what happens is all of a sudden I've got some problems with my kids" says this parent who tried to get involved to understand the situation. Later in his dialogue, he mentioned, "You know they started picking on my kids just to try to discourage me from asking further questions".

On the lack of understanding, one leader commented, "I think that parents first of all have got to understand, got to have an understanding, somebody's got to provide that understanding for them, and it's got to be at the leadership level here". The education committee was to play a role in developing communications between the council and the school. Respondents at the council level mentioned that "its a process that is slow, a slow process, because I find that you'd push too hard the parents would rebel...and if you go too slow, parents will rebel". The parents viewed this slow process as "politics". It seems that the council did not want to stir up dissention between the school and community. As one respondent describes, "It might hurt the school if things were done in not a proper manner. So this is what they're always worried about, politics". There appears to be a view at the leadership level that the school, being their pride and joy, had to be protected from the destructiveness of the community. On the other hand the community saw the leaders as being a buffer keeping the parents at bay from being active in the school.

One respondent identified this political play as keeping the people in a state of ignorance. She stated that the leadership does not make any attempts to "unite the

people". They make no attempt to help the people understand the system, during meetings of the education committee,

> "Because most of these Indian politicians they always want to start from a different level which is never from the bottom...You have to explain things to an individual and they're intimidated. The band people are intimidated because they don't want to be known as being dumb or don't understand."

The committee felt blocked to open the doors for the people to dialogue about the problems they saw their children experiencing in school.

They attempted to make small incremental changes by hosting events for the community at the school. These events such as awards night were successfully attended. Other attempts at forming rules and regulations were considered. Nothing was realized through this attempt because "politics played a role in it," replied one participant. The committee also attempted to make sense of the bilateral agreement between Indian Affairs and the county. They tried to ask the county directly about the agreement and the stipulations which would ensure that their needs were met. Respondents speak of the frustration experienced in trying to get information from the county as, "they won't listen to me," "we just can't get the county to move," and "we don't have nothing to say".

This committee was to deal with students from the reserve community. They did not attempt to work in conjunction with the parent advisory council (PAC) which

was operated by the parents of the surrounding communities. The PAC met once every month. One respondent stated, "I attended that a couple of times...I felt isolated...there was nothing for the band people in there." The feeling of isolation is intimidating for native people who want to be involved but see no connection of the PAC to the reserve children. "The closeness between the band people and that committee is so far apart". For one thing, the PAC members were "updated on information at a higher level than band people are" said this respondent.

The representation of the First Nations in the structure of educational decision-making is a concern expressed by the respondents in this study as well as the Alberta paper. There are areas that are unique to this specific community that cannot be widely attributed to reserves across the province. However, this concern to be involved in a meaningful way in the decision making abilities of the educational system was obvious in this community. Indeed, this notion alone cause many conflicts due to perceptions of power.

Representation of First Nations in the Structure of Educational Decision-making

The notion of ignorance is observed in the people at the community level who do not have a voice in the operations of the school. Without a voice to represent their concerns, they are not heard, the people are silent. The leadership has a role in keeping the people in the dark about education. The school plays a role at discouraging parents from actively participating in the school by way of the institutionalized PAC and the bureaucracy of the county. The school committee is

also ineffective in communicating the educational issues relevant to the people. For these reasons, the silent community is misunderstood by the leaders who interpret the lack of involvement as apathy.

The ones who suffer from this lack of understanding are the students who continue to repeat the patterns of dropping out, failing, and struggling in the system. The problems at the school continue unchecked as the prophetic illustration of the leader who mentioned, that, "we are going to lose at least five generations of students before we have any measure of success at the school", comes into being. One parent disliked the way native students were labelled in order to receive additional funding from Indian Affairs to the county. Other parents wanted to know where the money was spent because their children were not receiving the special programming that they required. One parent insisted that all native students were placed on modified programs and passed their grades regardless if they learned the curriculum. Problems at the school was a common concern in all of the interviews.

The final link between the concerns expressed in this study and those of the Alberta paper deals with the support for the position of the First Nations community to assist schools in meeting the educational needs of the students. The concern for adequate support is addressed by the people in this study.

Conflict in the Community

Conflict in the community is evident in the views of the people. Each respondent had a perception of the state of disunity in the community. When there is

disunity, conflicts arise and communication between people breaks down. The leadership disclaims responsibility by blaming the conflict on the people. The community respondents perceive the leadership primarily as blocking their efforts to solve problems. The people also do not perceive the school as their own, consequently their non-involvement is rationalized by this attitude. The disunity in the community is perceived as the lack of an organized effort to plan for improvements in educational delivery.

The conflict in the community is essentially between the leaders and the people. The leaders are held responsible for the establishment of the school on the reserve. The people would like to do something to create change and their disjointed efforts due to lack of leadership support leads to frustration. The dichotomy between the council and the people of the reserve is evident in the interviews.

The respondents claim, "they (leaders) didn't build us a school, they dragged two or three other people into there to help build that school and to cater to white people not to the Indians and their culture". This perspective clearly reflects the parental attitude towards the school not being their own. "This school was built on...young people's consent, we didn't have a total referendum to say what kind of school we wanted." A referendum is typically the manner in which the community as a whole vote to determine the direction of an issue brought to their attention by the leadership. Furthermore, a respondent claims, "the elders were left out of it". In this case, the people did not have the opportunity to vote on the school that was built with

band funds, Indian Affairs contributions and the county involvement. As the leadership appeared to have acted unilaterally apart from the community, the financial and value commitment to ensure its success was at stake. Certainly, the people's view of the leadership is described by one respondent as "dictatorship".

One leader mentioned the autonomy a Chief could exercise in the following statement:

> Under this system, I can do anything as Chief, I can do anything in two years, anything I wanted to do. Nobody has any power against me. I'm not accountable to my membership but if I were accountable to my membership then it would be a different story then there would be true representation.

Another leader denotes the lack of communication between the council and the people in stating, "I don't know what the people think."

Rather than directing their energy towards creating a supportive environment, the leaders down play their role by stating that the community is at fault for their plight. "The community has the problem, it's not the teachers, it's not the school, it's the community that has the problem," one leader commented. Another leader stated, "There's nothing as a leader that we can do. It's up to the parents to get their kids to succeed." Another strategy to shift responsibility is to blame the people. This statement was repeated word for word by two of the leaders, "I blame a lot on our elders too, they had become complacent and they've thrown up their hands". And this statement also attributes fault, "I think the people to blame are the elders because they

never taught the children how to speak the language."

The leaders repeatedly disclaimed the community efforts to "push" for education and denied them access to the school by creating a buffer in appointing members to the education committee. A member of the committee stated, "the councillor in charge put word out that not just any band member can sit on the committee, they were hand picked". This respondent perceived the role of the committee as creating, "communication with the school systems whether it's elementary, junior high, or high school. We're supposed to assist our students, they're having problems. If our student counsellor isn't getting through to our students, then we try to find out what the problem is and try to resolve it...through meetings with the school or county." Another direction the committee determined that they must pursue was in writing policy, noted a member, "how far our committee should go", in dispatching their role.

The leaders efforts to smooth things out consisted of hiring a counsellor-liaison worker. The role of this position as one councillor stated, was to "establish the problem children that we do have...we hired the native person here as a counsellor-liaison, from teachers, the troubled kids to the house". This was done to ensure that the problems at school were directed to the parents. This leader said, "if there is problems in the school, it's up to the parents and the teachers to solve the problems".

Another way that problems were solved by the leaders, was to transfer students to a different school and the liaison was in place to assist the students in this

process. The student counsellors were seen by one respondent to be ineffective in encouraging students to stay in school. "The student counsellors...say that it's too many parties or they're not interested, they just quit or problems at home. They (student counsellors) use all these things" as excuses for affixing blame on the student for failing in the system, stated one respondent.

The leader who claimed the problem to be in the community stated, "there's a lot of family feuds, a lot of jealousy. Our people are so frustrated they've got to vent their anger some way and they can't reach out and touch someone else because those persons are untouchable. So they vent their anger and frustrations in the only way they know how and that's against each other". The leaders' claim to the conflicts in the community is supported by one parent respondent who said, "They (parents) just totally disagree, one group of parents on this side say, well it's O.K. my kids are learning. And then the other group on this side are saying, well my kids aren't, they're just waiting to get out of that school and be drop-outs". This respondent knew first hand that conflict creates negativity amongst the membership. She said, "I worked as a liaison person and I know how much negative attitude there was on the part of the parents".

The community respondents view these efforts the leaders have made disparagingly. "We always say that our students of today are our future of tomorrow. But right now, it's just words coming from our leadership anyway", a respondent quipped. "All talk, no action, that's all this reserve is", remarked another person who

also stated, "We have leaders in positions and they have good understanding, they have good topics but they don't know how to implement them."

The community respondents view the leaders as utilizing impediments to create disharmony. At least two respondents regard the impediment as politics. "Rumours and family situations, where the leadership use it. We're not a united community. People play their roles, politics is one of the main things that wrecks up communities, in this reserve especially." "The councillor in charge of that area of education (has) to understand...and to leave politics out of it", relates another respondent.

Lack of leadership support is considered to impede the community peoples' efforts to unite. Consider these statements to this effect, "There's no support background for the band people...the leadership to me is not there in regard to back up a person that can do something for this reserve. And things can be done if it was allowed to." "Our leaders should be assisting of community and uniting us in some manner, where it's just not being made. Every time I would pressure for (policies), they'd make an excuse, not enough people here. We never got to those rules and regulations and how far our committee should go, politics played a role in it". These statements by the people claiming that the leaders were not conducive to supporting them also caused further frustration. Lacking leadership and support, the frustration of the people is obvious in the manner in which they chose to move within the educational system.

The leadership does not attempt to listen to the people and the education

system is not offering too much in the way of understanding where the people are. One respondent stated her opinion in regards to this point,

> "If our leaders can listen ... we're being pressured by our people, they're not involved enough, they're not listened to enough in that school. We believe this is one of the major problems we're having with the band people with the school. That gap is getting bigger, parents are shying away because they are not listened to even though from the start they tried to cooperate with the school, they tried to communicate with the school. But all that failed."

Parents appear to be willing to understand but nobody is giving direction. "If everything runs smoothly in the school, that's all that a parent can ask for. The role is theirs to cooperate with the school. Right now you don't have too much of that because of the treatment our students are getting. Parents don't want to cooperate, their backs are up against the wall, so they have no choice." Through lack of communication, "these problems aren't going to go away, they're just going to get bigger, they're just going to worsen." Another respondent mentioned this lack of communication coupled with no support as, "it seems like I'm charging in there by myself, and I've got no support and again, I'm not a boss, so they're not going to listen to me". A parent who attempted to participate in the school was hurt, "the school discouraged me from going over there, by picking on my children, saying my kids were bad. So as a result in order to save my kids, I didn't go across there very much anymore."

By not being listened to the people are devalued and are hurt. One respondent relates this belief, "I guess the leaders feel the elders are sort of a burden to them." This statement is powerful in that the elders who are the natural teachers of the community felt pushed aside. In re-establishing their proper place in the community, the respondent commented:

> I've taken the time to go and talk to them and explain all this...the first thing that they had responded with was, "Why should I? They're not going to listen anyway." They had given up because they were set aside for so long and...when our leaders did...go ask them some questions, just more or less felt that they had been used. Now they're coming out..."Unless you're going to listen to the direction that I'm going to give you, forget it.

The statements of the respondents on the theme of support for the school and the apparent lack of a future direction by leadership and the community has created some alarming conflicts. The people have learned to become victims of the system and assert blame rather than assume responsibility. A description of the attempts and efforts generated to meet the needs and concerns stated above are presented in the next section.

Efforts Made to Meet the Educational Needs of the People

The people lack the understanding of how to be effective partners in the education of their children. From a leader's point of view, "individual parents go into the school and try and understand the system of the school. Like they can go to the

school and demand that their child be moved to a different class...taken out of school or moved to a different school...speak to the principal and find out any problems." A parent observed that the parents do not know how to exercise their rights as partners in education. Instead, "they don't question the system, they go in there and they attack the principal and the teachers. But they don't try and change the system to have a better understanding or to have better participation. They literally go there and attack the people themselves and that's not the answer", she mused. A leader remarked, "the only time they ever go to see the principal is when the principal sends the child home with a note telling you John, Paul, or Mary have been bad today. That's the only time we ever hear from the staff at the school". Receiving communications from the school on a negative tone does not help the situation. Some parents build up their frustration and when its at its "peak...they can go there and start kicking butt", said a parent. She adds, "but it shouldn't be. Yet, that's how our people are, that's how they go about things."

She suggests instead that parents learn to have a collaborative approach to solving problems with school personnel. "You go there and try and tell them nicely, "Look we do need these changes. We should do it now before it's too late, before another ten years rolls over and we have another group of delinquents here." This approach might work as one respondent who works in the school stated, "the teachers...they're trying to find what's happening on the reserve and they're looking for answers" and "I see a few of them, I can't say all of them, but I see a few of them,

they're trying to find out what the children are like." From the school side, there is receptivity to discussing issues rationally. The view of the leaders is, "if the parents would get more involved...the relationship between the parents and the staff at the school would be a lot better and we would be encouraging the students to do better."

In truth, the parents need to regain responsibility for the education of their children. The leaders are stating this, the education committee is trying to achieve this end, and at least one parent respondent agrees that parents need to be more active in their children's schooling. "The parents...instead of letting the white man do all the work for them...I think they got away from their own responsibilities. I think they left the whole school system to rear their kids for them - to mould their children's lives and they were not really not - they didn't get 100 per cent participation from the parents." Resignedly, this parent admits, "that responsibility should lay on the parent, it's up to the parent to see that his or her child is getting the whole benefit". A leader retorts, "we have to quit becoming an enabling society".

"If we continue to go the way we are, we'll continue to be a failure the way we are now", is a statement made which puts the whole conflict in perspective. Responsibility and ownership of the problems will serve to create the necessary changes in parent involvement, leadership support, and unity. In the face of all this conflict, two events occurred which caused rapid changes in the delivery of educational services in the community. The county opened a school in the adjoining acreage community and attracted a large majority of the non-native students who were

attending the school on the reserve. INAC announced their devolution plan to absolve themselves from operating schools on the reserves across the country. Once more the community leaders found themselves in the situation where a decision had to be made quickly.

With a handful of non-native students to consider, the county was interested in dissolving the 75 year bilateral agreement with Indian Affairs. A respondent mentioned that "it's only a matter of time", in relating the concern over the bilateral agreement and how the county administered funding allocations to the school on the reserve. The heralded change was upon the community. A respondent on this matter stated, "for every change, for everything there is an answer." This respondent also stated that, "the only solution that I've heard a majority of these people saying is we have to take over our own school, we have to have total control over it. Only then can we dictate what has to be taught in the schools."

They perceived that the population of the school was a sign that change was inevitable. The people wanted to have more decision making powers in selecting personnel, curriculum, and inservice training. This opportunity was being within their reach because the county was starting to reevaluate the cost-benefit situation at this school.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) announced the pending changes resulting from devolution. Their plans of down sizing the regional office and encouraging reserves to take over program administration was referred to as

devolution. The reserves were given at least one year to initiate planning for the take over of the schools which were presently managed or funded by INAC. For many reserves, this was given as a directive rather than offering them a choice. In the situation where reserves refused to accept full responsibility for school management, INAC threatened to turn them over to another interested party.

In 1992, the reserve leadership reacted to this news by preparing for the change over of the school. As their educational delivery was managed by the county, the leaders knew that if they did not do something, the county could claim the school entirely should INAC annul the 75 year bilateral contract. The county was eager to release themselves from the contract since they were currently investing in a school consisted of a total native student population. The tax-payers were pressuring the county officials to resolve the contract by this time. It appeared that the band would have no other option but to take over the management and administration of the school.

The planning of this take over began in the summer of 1992 by the Chief and council in the establishment of an interim education committee. The committee was directed to research and devise a plan for take over. The five member committee travelled to other reserves and attended education conferences, to gather facts and meet with native people who were already administering their own schools. INAC provided financial contributions for the band to research, plan and prepare for band control of educational services. The committee in cooperation with the Chief and

council hired an outside consultant to assist with the negotiations and preparation for take over.

In the beginning of 1993, the committee held an informational meeting for the members of the band. They brought together INAC officials and invited native educational administrators to talk to the people about the take over. Questions from the floor were answered by the committee, INAC officials, and outside administrators. One of the biggest concern voiced by the people at this meeting was in respect of the special needs of the students. The people wanted to know what type of financial commitment INAC was prepared to offer to the students who were way below grade level. They also wanted to know why the county did not make significant efforts to help their children who were categorized as special needs students. Unfortunately, no county officials attended this meeting and answers could not be provided.

The people were for the first time in twenty years, being asked to voice their concerns. A lot of questions were posed about the finances and how these were to be administered once contributions were made to the band by INAC. The education committee was certain that once they hired a full-time educational administrator, a mechanism would be ascertained. The contingency of 75 band members were told that the Chief and council would assume full responsibility of the school in the fall of 1993. The reactions of the people during this meeting was observed to be one of hopeful anticipation.

For the people who are now in control of the school on the reserve, the

findings of this study will be useful. The requirement to listen to the people is paramount. Community members have experienced the effects of schooling for five generations. Their educational experiences from the days of residential schools, to integration in outside schools and then the reserve school, has built their knowledge and understanding of what they want. The knowledge of the people has to be utilized to fulfill their educational aspirations. The people know what they need, they know what they want, and they are the best sources for the educational leaders to gather information from.

Planning is essential. As one respondent noted, "all I want to work at this level is the problem solving. I want to get more of the community together". The ideal way of problem solving at this stage is to bring the community together to ensure that the school is meeting their needs. The needs must be considered in conjunction with the concerns of the day. The desires of the people are related to educational outcomes that they can realize once they come together. Without question, the people have considerable sources of information that were gleaned during the period of time that they observed the situation. Now they need to be invited to share their knowledge in a forum where they will be respected and trusted to share their voice. This forum of course will affect the future attempts to meet the needs of their community.

Educational Desires

The desires of the people are future oriented goals that they believe will make a difference for their children to enjoy a good life. Their voices will be used in this

section as these outcomes were not provided in the setting description.

Several respondents stated the desire to provide high school programming on the reserve. "I would like to see a high school on the reserve", stated one parent. A leader also stated, "If I could get my way, I'd like to build a big high school and have a building where (we bring adult education programs), university programs, upgrading programs on to the reserve". "Maybe if there was a high school here then maybe they (students) would continue on and stay in school", said another parent. "We have to have the control right from kindergarten right down to grade 12", suggested a leader. All of the respondents had expressed this desire to help the young people succeed through the inclusion of high school programming on the reserve.

Another desire was in creating an understanding of cultural identity. One leader stated, "We need to develop a program that would take a look at the cultural identity of our people, of our students. I think they need to be proud, they need to know who they are, and they need to be proud of that fact". Other respondents agreed that pride is a necessary part of "feeling good" about who they are. One respondent suggested that this whole area is best provided through a cultural centre. "I know the young people now are wanting, they say why don't we take control of this school? Just teach for us, for the next ten years, teach us our own language, our own culture, so we can be good Indians in the future. So we can learn good qualities of leadership and the sharing of the community." The respondent continues to relate why this cultural centre is important,

> We have to learn our languages, we have to teach our (languages) in order to be able to claim that (nationhood). And it's all tied in with how our forefather made the deal (Treaty). Why did they make it that way? Because they believed in the Creator, and they believed in the four directions, which is the sky and the ground, what makes us live. It's about life. This is what basically...we have to teach our children.

In the Treaty negotiations, the federal government agreed to provide education. "Under the Treaty, you can ask for a cultural school," a respondent advised when asked about how this centre could be provided.

The apparent lack of understanding of culture is cloaked in fear. "People are afraid of the unknown. So this is where the fear comes from", explained a respondent. If culture is understood as life and the interconnectedness of people to the earth and sky, it is odd that people would fear knowledge of their ancestors. The elders role is to share this knowledge, "elders will be passing on the traditional value system, because when they are gone, there will be nothing, nobody to teach". The elders have discussed this idea for a long time, "this is where I said, the elders would be willing to go at the cultural centre", to teach the people, this respondent stated.

This desire suggests a pragmatic approach of cornering many of the concerns and solving difficulties in the community. The elders are willing to teach, the community people need to address identity issues related to culture and language, and the unity of the community is founded on the cultural teachings. It makes perfect

sense to attend to this desire before the elders pass on.

Another desire of the people is to "unite". "The whole community is not working together for one thing, if this community can unite in some manner and understand that there's a friend out there that you can trust and understand things," then remarkable changes will occur, noted a respondent. Another respondent desired the community members to be involved together in creating change as,

"I think they should have total participation. I think that it's what this community needs is a good education conference to get that understanding of the school, how it's functioning, why it's not functioning. Some kind of understanding of this is what is happening to the children and this the reason why these children are having all these problems. It's got to be brought out sometimes."

All respondents said leadership was important to achieve unity. "They ...need a leader that will support the value of life in education", was one statement. Another said, "I believe with proper leadership at the band level, we can do this and we can also with proper leadership from chief and council correct the problem at the school." The statement referenced two ideals, band level leadership and Chief and council leadership. These two are not seen as separate or dichotomous. They are in fact based on a traditional form of government. A leader responded to this government as, "true representation". Also that, "the interests got to be represented by consensus, by the fact that the people have to go back to some of their basic traditions". He continues to explain this as, "our traditional government's were never designed that

way", meaning autocratic. The service agencies must work together instead of in isolation. They must work together "to bring our people together...(in a) community healing strategy", reflected a leader.

In working together the community would change. Says one respondent, "I think it would climb, it would really climb because I think if we had that direction, that support, even elder' support...I think that would be a very touching area, if it were to ever happen, I think we would go a long way."

This chapter presented the knowledge of the people by describing their educational experiences from the earliest beginnings to the present. In utilizing the people's voice to describe their situation, understanding their concerns and needs revealed their reality. Throughout this period of time, education was provided by outsiders who did not take the time to listen to the people. To summarize the needs, concerns, and desires of the people in embarking upon this new venture of inclusion, the meaning of their knowledge is provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This chapter is the culmination of the respondents' answers to the questions posed concerning their educational needs, concerns, and desires. The needs and concerns relate to the perception of the respondents' interpretations to their experiences of the past and present. The desires of the people are those dreams which they have for the future. It is important to emphasize that hope is still alive, and as long as people have dreams, they have energy to utilize in their favour. As the major theme that emerged from this study was colonialism and its effects, the vision found in the dreams and aspirations of the people is extremely important. In the summation of the findings, the research question will be answered, and the benefit of this study to the community will be identified. The recommendations that the community may consider are presented in the final section of this chapter.

In the presentation of the findings, I have used the people's words as much as possible. This was done for a specific reason. Words are powerful. People select words to express their experiences, visions, and their very being. In presenting this summary of the findings, I am using my words to mirror to the people their own reality. In choosing to present this final chapter as the mirror, I am attempting to reciprocate the gift that the people have given to me.

The gift that I received from this journey is the opportunity to learn and grow as an individual. This has been a very difficult and lengthy journey for me. From the moment I began to conduct the interviews to the time I have written this chapter, I shifted my paradigm on at least two occasions. The first shift occurred after I completed the readings on colonialism. I found a name to affix to the grief and loss that the people were experiencing. I related to this experience and I grieved with them. My second paradigm shift occurred after I read the book by P. Friere and M. Horton (1990), *We Make the Road by Walking*. I recall reading the final pages through tears of joy because I regained the hope that I needed to present the people's voices confidently. This gift of learning and growth is a tremendous milestone in my life and I owe it to the people of this wonderful community.

Summary of the Findings

Colonialism and its effects were determined to exist as being fully operational in its insidious nature in this First Nations community. As the subject of colonialism is not taught in schools nor is the literature accessible to the people, the wounded patterns of behaviour are immediately ascribed to the myths developed to oppress and silence the people. Thus, the people operate as though they do not know any better and that all ventures they embark upon are doomed to failure. The obvious example is in their past and current schooling experiences. The insidious cycle wrought upon the First Nations communities to blame themselves as victims will continue until the myths

propagated by colonialism are shattered and dialogue begins amongst the people.

It is very easy to fall into the trap of viewing First Nations people with a harsh lens. It is much more difficult to be empathetic to First Nation's reality and to see that the history of colonial control has created intergenerational effects and trauma. It is worthy to see with a compassionate mind that the people have survived amidst the turmoil and have changed, adapted, and adopted to new ways of living. They have maintained those aspects of the culture that retain their integrity and sense of kinship. These aspects of the cultural fabric exist including the language, humour, and passion for their future generations. These are signs of hope and vitality.

In coming to terms with the effects of colonialism and understanding the nature of neo-colonialism, the people will begin the journey of their own decolonization. On this journey, they will practise dialogue. It is so important to listen to each other's stories and to acknowledge their own knowledge. They will begin to talk more because their words are listened to respectfully. In the dialogue process, they will value their worth and purpose as human beings. They will also reaffirm their relationships to one another. Along this journey they will be building their sense of community.

The respondents' concern for the state of their community is significant. Many of the problems they are currently experiencing have a connection to the high drop out rate over the years. The people said that to turn this situation around, a holistic approach must be taken. The people admit to this problem. They recognize

the need to work together and to be supportive of all efforts. All stakeholders are recognized as playing a role in community development. Program delivery for all services including education, health, housing, and others must also work together in the future and avoid operating as bureaucratic hierarchical islands. The concerns the people of the community must address together are:

1. valuing education as a priority;
2. learning about systems;
3. recognizing and commiting to healing;
4. developing a healing strategy;
5. understanding and dealing with conflict effectively;
6. valuing continuous learning as adult learners; and
7. securing financial and human resources for these purposes.

These concerns arise out of their current situation. The desire to move forward and deal with these concerns is shared amongst the people.

All the respondents said that they see a need for community involvement in education. Involvement is considered to be important for all the community groups at various levels, including leadership, elders, young people, and parents. Involvement in the education committee, Chief and council, school site, and educational events are seen to be the areas where the people could be brought together. Valuing education as a priority will serve to bring the people together and another perceived need of unity will be achieved.

Unity is inclusive of support, trust, and communication. To achieve unity, the people have to recognize their worth and trust one another as valuable contributors to the broad spectrum of education. A spin-off effect with involvement and unity is an effective education committee. The committee will then be able to represent the people in translating their needs into an effective educational operation. Some of the work that the committee must be cognizant of is to relate effectively not only with the community members but also with the Chief and council. Working together, the leaders of education will achieve the perceived needs of the community most effectively.

Another pressing need the respondents agreed upon was the identity issue. The perception of themselves is tied to their lack of understanding of who they are as First Nations people. They all expressed the need to teach their youngsters to be proud of their heritage. The elders are perceived as important players in approaching this issue. There are people who have retained this knowledge and apply this wisdom amongst them. The elders have to be acknowledged and affirmed for what they can contribute. They would like to see the children develop into healthy individuals with sound knowledge and confidence in their identity.

The respondents recognized the current state of educational service delivery in that the children have been streamed through a modified passing system. The result is that many of the children are failing and are below grade level. The community people would like to see that accountability is achieved as they do not want their system to

fail their children. They see a need to secure policies, funding, and a needs assessment.

They must also understand the system and permit themselves to make mistakes. From a mistake, they will learn and do things better at the next opportunity. Therefore, they must realize that most often when things are not working, it is due to the system. They must not blame themselves or the people who operate in the system. Systems can be changed so that they better serve the needs of the people.

The respondents also have said that there is a need for a counselling service in education. This service would assist children in planning their goals and help with academic and personal problems. This counselling service is not to be considered as an enabling agent for parents. As all respondents have ascertained that the parents have the responsibility to support their children's educational efforts.

In listening to the people participating in this study, a question was asked about educational desires. All respondents had a number of desires about educational delivery and their community. These desires reflect their needs and are based on their reality. The concerns are drop outs, language retention, and once again the issue of unity in the community is included.

The drop out situation was regarded as a primary concern. As this situation has been carrying on for quite some time, a multitude of secondary concerns relating to this issue were determined. The connections between the concerns of drop outs spans a wide spectrum of related difficulties experienced by the people. The respondents see a concern with students staying in school.

Staying in school is tied to their concern for teachers to be inserviced in cross-cultural understanding. They also are concerned with the lack of professional native teachers in the school to serve as role models for the children. The teachers who are more understanding of the native perception of life will be inclined to give more to the community and the students. The community would like to see the teachers involved in their lives rather than being at the school from eight a.m. to four p.m. and leaving. They would prefer teachers who take an active interest in their children's whole being.

Connected to the teacher's understanding is the concern over relevancy of the curriculum. A knowledgeable teacher would be more effective in ensuring that curricular instruction and delivery were relevant to the students. With effective instruction, the next concern would be kept in check as well. This concern is over modified passing and pushing students through the system thoughtlessly. The respondents want to see that their children receive individualized programming where ever necessary. As they know, the students are below grade level, this concern is important. To change the situation of frustrated children dropping out, this area of special needs attention is crucial.

The children who have been in the system are frustrated and hurt by the lack of response to their needs. The respondents are concerned with self-esteem issues which their children are experiencing. The school system must address this concern carefully in the planning, recruitment of personnel, and selection of appropriate curriculum and support materials and programs.

The respondents also are concerned with the loss of language fluency on the reserve. The children and adults must be taught to respect this loss of language and the impending problems that will continue as long as it is not valued. Without a language, the culture is not understood. Language is a significant factor in establishing nationhood. Language revival is crucial for the community to embrace if they want to retain their indigenous identity. As the respondents unanimously agreed that language proficiency is a major concern, it is up to them to take action. Language must be taught in the school and in the community by a respected teacher.

Each of these concerns have not been addressed effectively in the past. For a long time the community people have been "pushed aside" and have felt disempowered and alienated. They recognize that they need to come together to make improvements in the community. To quote from Duran (1995), the people must empower themselves to make the changes that are needed in their lives and,

> "The new knowledge must be derived from within the community itself, because who can care more about the community and its survival than the members of the communty? We believe that we have the mental and spiritual resources to accomplish the task that is ahead of us and to heal the wound that has been inflicted on us. As we approach the year 2000, we are also arriving at the renewal of Native American traditions as the way of being in creation" (p. 208).

The healing that must take place is resultant of the effects of colonization. The

traumas that have been experienced and inflicted upon their lives is intergenerational. Therefore, the commitment to healing will open new possibilities. Healing takes courage and involves risk-taking. The benefits outweigh the losses and cycles of dysfunction can be regenerated into functioning in healthy ways. Healing involves the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of being human.

There are a variety of resources and sources of healing. For every dimension there is diversity in ways of approaching wholeness. It is important to recognize that everything has merit and that every journey will be different. It is also important to realize that difference is appreciated.

A community strategy to deal with healing has been identified as a desire. The leaders of this movement must recognize that they are embarking on a new pattern and way of dealing with issues. As ground breakers, the leaders must "walk their talk" and recognize that their actions and behaviours are windows to their beliefs. These leaders also affirm that the actions they take in the present time will bring about change and opportunities for their children to experience and enjoy quality of life in a community that is unified.

In creating change, the people will experience conflicts in their own personal and interpersonal lives. Perceptions that exist in the community are such that conflict is viewed as being undesireable and impeding growth. To turn this around and make conflict work for them rather than against them, the people must learn to manage and facilitate conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution is a learned skill. There are basic beliefs that nurture positive conflict resolution. These beliefs and skills are available from within the community. Conflict resolution and decolonization processes are very similar. Both processes involve dialogue, commitment to relationships, and basic beliefs in human dignity, worth, and value. They also create opportunities for learning. Learning starts at birth and continues until death, it is life-long.

The resources that are available to the people are within their own reach. One of the basic beliefs is that everyone has the answers to their own questions and can resolve conflict. Another basic belief is to trust in the self to know what is needed for healing and growth to occur. These beliefs acknowledge that one's own knowledge is worthwhile and valuable. This is the basic premise of self-esteem as well. A person with self-esteem acknowledges the source of power in others and is appreciative of others and their potential. When potential is actualized, people must honour themselves and be honoured by others. This is a basic human need. As they acknowledge, value, and honour each other, they are building a sense of community.

A final word on financial resources in relation to this particular community: the people possessed and accessed financial wealth albeit a short period of time. During this time of financial capability, opportunities were created as well as problems. Money is a means to achieve purposes in life. Financial resources are available to benefit the whole community. The actions and strategies that are purposeful in the lives of the people require the finances.

Relationship to the *Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education* Study (1987)

In the findings of this study, the First Nations community identified similar educational concerns, needs and problems to those of the *Alberta Native People's Views of Native Education* Study (1987). These findings were summarized in the previous section. There are concerns, needs, and problems that are unique to these people that must be dealt with specifically by this community. In determining the extent to which the people in this study were aware of the implementation of recommendations to their satisfaction, it was identified that the people must resolve the conflict situations and arrive at a common ground. The future directions that are worthy of pursuit to fulfill their own unique educational needs are identifiable and are within their own knowledge base.

Benefit to the Community

The intention of this study was to assert that the people know their own needs, concerns, and desires and are in the best possible position to act in a unified way to achieve their educational goals and aspirations. The respondents all want the same thing, they want the best future for their children. This is the common ground of all the participants in this study. It is within their power to create that future for their children. A meaningful statement by a leader was shared as,

"They've got to understand, if I'm going to stop this cycle, or if I'm going to be a part of the solution, then I have to make sure that I'm concerned about my children's future, and their future is education."

To be certain that parents are involved, the community people must develop a strategy to define parental responsibility, roles, and support meaningful parental involvement in their own school.

The commitment that is made to life-long learning today will benefit the community in the future. They have dreams. They have roots. They have common ground. They are rich in knowledge. Each member of the community is on a learning journey. The potential to determine their destiny is in their hands. The challenges along this journey are in actualizing their dignity, worth, and value as individuals, families, and community.

Recommendations for the Future

1. Acknowledge the knowledge of the people;
2. Dialogue about the educational experiences of the people;
3. Work towards reaffirming, re-establishing, and returning to the importance of relationships between the members;
4. Commit to a vision of the future and identify goals to maintain the uniqueness of the culture and identity of the people;

5. Trust in the people to plan a course of action aligned with the vision and goals of education for the schooling process which involves a continuous improvement cycle.
6. Manage and facilitate change and conflict towards resolution and consensus-building.

Reflecting on the experiences I have retained from seeking to understand the people, I truly appreciated this opportunity to listen and learn. I encourage, applaud, and support the personal and collective journeys of the people towards healing and growth. I look forward to one day reading of their journeys. All my relations.

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